

# Elementary English



ORGAN OF THE

NATIONAL

COUNCIL

OF

TEACHERS

OF

ENGLISH



JANUARY,  
1956

VIRGINIA LEE BURTON  
COMPLETE AND PARTIAL READING  
CREATIVE DRAMATICS  
WRITING ACTIVITIES



From Virginia Lee Burton, *Calico the Wonder Horse*

# Elementary ENGLISH

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JANUARY, 1956

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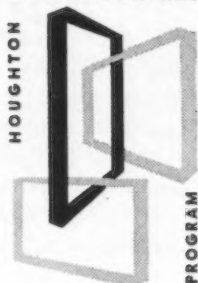
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*By Way of Introduction . . .*

Dr. JAMES C. MACCAMPBELL, who writes this month's informative article on Virginia Lee Burton, artist-author, has not allowed his important administrative duties to interfere with his keen interest in children's literature. He has written for us before, and we hope we may have the pleasure of publishing his work often in the future.

Readers of *Elementary English* do not need to be introduced to PROFESSOR DOLCH. He has pioneered in the teaching of reading, and has published many books and articles, some in collaboration with Mrs. Dolch, who shares his interest in the field. The Dolches have just published two new books (through Garrard Press, Champaign, Illinois), of stories which appeal to people of all ages but which can be read with pleasure by children whose reading ability falls in the early elementary years. Next month we hope to publish another article by Dr. Dolch, this one on school research.

MURIEL CROSBY'S article on Creative Dramatics was first given as an address before a conference at the University of Delaware. Dr. Crosby has just completed a term as member of the Council's Elementary Section Committee. She is a member of the Council's Commission on the English Curriculum.

CARRIE STEGALL'S article, "Fourth Grade Children Write A Book," is the introduction to a book describing in detail the development of a children's project in writing. To this editor, it represents one of the most creative and resourceful experiments in the teaching of writing to young children yet published.

Mrs. ESTHER D. CREED is another of Dr. LELAND B. JACOBS' proteges. She has done newspaper work in China (Peking Chronicle, 1934-1936), and has taught in the Lenox School, New York City. At present she is a graduate student at Teachers College, Columbia University.

HUGO E. PRESSNALL, who reports an interesting study of parents' opinions about reading instruction, is an Army Air Force veteran. A student of Dr. David H. Russell, he has his master's degree from the University of California.

The team of JOHNSON and BANY are now familiar to *Elementary English* readers. This month they attack the difficult problem of changing children's attitudes toward writing.

Librarians play an enormously important part in the process of teaching children to read. The article on dramatic role-playing by BETTINA KRAMER, PAULA LOY, and WINIFRED WALKER, illustrates vividly one of the ways in which librarians can help in this difficult task.

EDNA LUE FURNESS' articles always represent a valuable combination of scientific fact and practical guidance. The present article on reversal tendencies is no exception.

Sister M. THEOPHANE shows convincingly how the problem of television can be turned to advantage in bringing parents and teachers together.

EDITH J. MITCHELL, whose helpful farm unit appears this month, is working for her master's degree at the University of Illinois.



# ELEMENTARY ENGLISH

XXXIII

JANUARY, 1956

No. 1

JAMES C. MACCAMPBELL

## Virginia Lee Burton: Artist-Storyteller

It was apparently by accident that the children of America have the work of Virginia Lee Burton to enjoy. As is so often the case when people have many talents, Miss Burton found it difficult to know which of her abilities and gifts she wished to develop. Thus it is that an unfortunate accident to her father turned out to be a fortunate one for the field of writing and illustration for young children. Ballet dancing had become, for Miss Burton, the most satisfying expression for her abilities during her girlhood and she studied this art and worked hard to become a master of it. Then, just as she was ready to embark upon a career in the theater, circumstances made it necessary for her to remain at home.

Ballet dancing requires a theater and an audience for its full and satisfactory expression. Sketching and drawing, at least at first, do not. They can be carried on at home. This, it appears, is the way developments occurred so that the world

today has an artist and a storyteller who might very well have been a leading ballerina instead. The writing, which is recognized now as a major aspect of Miss Burton's talent, developed much later. In the case of so many young teachers, the ability of working creatively with young children does not develop until they are placed with the children and "find themselves," so to speak. This seems to have been the way the story telling of Virginia Lee Burton came to develop. Her own children were her original sounding board for the stories that are known so well today. Indeed, her first book, destined to oblivion, was rejected also by her young son, who frankly and obviously went to sleep when it was read to him.

But the books came much later in the career of this creative woman. First came the requisite study that always ac-



*Virginia Lee Burton*

Dr. MacCampbell is Director of Elementary Schools in the Cleveland Heights City School District, Cleveland, Ohio.

companies talent. After her disappointment in a theatrical career she returned to the California of her girlhood and studied at the California School of Fine Arts in San Francisco. Here she worked in the areas of drawing and design with Mr. and Mrs. Robert Hestwood. Returning to the East, she continued her study at the Boston Museum. During this time much of her work was with George Demetrios, the sculptor, and they were married on March 28, 1931.

Thus the girlhood of Virginia Lee Burton was one filled with study and preparation for two creative areas in which she found herself talented and able. She had done many kinds of work relating to these abilities. She had taught dancing in Sonoma, California, and art in the Harry E. Burroughs Foundation and in a Y. M. C. A. work camp. She had already seen the way in which her talents might serve other people.

The record of Miss Burton's published work begins with *Choo Choo*, which appeared in 1937. This book was written for her first son Aristides, who appears as Aris in the dedication of the book. One can almost hear Aris chuckle as he hears the book read. It is, in every sense, a story the four-to-six-year-old will enjoy. But, and this, of course, is true with all the books of Miss Burton, this book cannot be wholly enjoyed without the pictures which are an integral part of the text.

All little children, in common with many older ones and their fathers, are fascinated by trains. And often they wish to give them personality and a life of

their own. When they find a book which does just this they are delighted. Here, then, is a book about a little engine whose name is Choo Choo and who, they discover on the first page, is a "she":

Once upon a time  
there was a little engine.

Her name was CHOO CHOO.

She was a beautiful little engine.

All black and shiny.

Best of all, from the point of view of the young child, Choo Choo makes fascinating noises. Anyone reading this book to little children, parents, teachers, or librarians, must be prepared to use the author's words effectively so that the noises of the engine are childlike and meaningful to these young listeners. There is also a very important person in Jim, Choo Choo's engineer, who took such good care of her. Less important characters to the story but characters whose names have good sounds for children are Oley, the fireman, and Archibald, the conductor. The story of Choo Choo is an exciting story for the young child. It includes the elements of plot and conflict and suspense which are necessary components of stories for readers of all ages. *Choo Choo* is uniquely designed in this respect to delight the young child.

In *Choo Choo*, as in Miss Burton's other stories, the illustrations are so much a part of the whole that the reader and the listener are affected by both at the same time. So as we read of the adventures of Choo Choo we can also see her as she races over the tracks after Jim and Oley and Archibald had left her alone. The incident of the runaway train is told

vividly in story and in picture. One without the other is less than satisfactory to children.

The second book to appear from the pen of Virginia Lee Burton was *Mike Mulligan and His Steam Shovel*. This book, like *Choo Choo*, was tried out on Miss Burton's own children and this one is dedicated to her second son, Mike. *Mike Mulligan and His Steam Shovel* has an advantage over *Choo Choo* in its attractiveness to children because there is much beautiful color included as part of the illustrations. Children are immediately drawn to this story by the lavish splashes of color and the effective way it is used to increase the sustained interest in the story plot. Again, as in *Choo Choo*, the inanimate object which is the central character is given personality and a name. This time it is a marvelous steam shovel about which the reader learns on the first page:

Mike Mulligan had a steam shovel,  
a beautiful red steam shovel.  
Her name was Mary Anne.  
Mike Mulligan was very proud of  
Mary Anne.  
He always said that she could  
dig  
as much in a day as a  
hundred men could dig in  
a week, but he had never  
been quite sure that  
this was true.

Here at the beginning, the story is delineated for the children who are reading it or for the younger ones who are hearing it. This is an essential requirement for interesting writing for young children. Where interest span and attention span are short at best, interest must be captured without delay. Then the story can unfold with close attention to

the detail which is necessary to fulfill the story's requirements.

Again, as in *Choo Choo*, the story of Mike Mulligan and Mary Anne includes passages developing understandings of vocabulary which, while not the central purpose of the book, in any sense, do supply needed background for young children as they prepare and develop their ability to read for themselves. The illustrations are childlike and are arranged to serve the text well by appearing on the page where they are needed. This book, along with *Choo Choo*, augment the repertoire of read-aloud books which parents and teachers should develop for themselves.

With the appearance of *Calico, the Wonder Horse* in 1941, Miss Burton made an attempt to challenge the appeal of the comics. A great deal of planning and development of ideas for this story grew out of Miss Burton's concern over the way children were drawn to the cheap and often bad comic books which appear in such numbers on the newsstands. These two little books (a second edition came out in 1950) are attractive, easy-to-handle books with a minimum of reading matter on each page. The general format consists of two drawings on most pages with the text for each achieved by the use of various colored pages on which the black drawings and print show up vividly. Experienced teachers of young children know that the most consistently popular stories for the pre-adolescent are horse stories. In most of these the ingredients are a horse, a man who is young and usually a cowboy, and lots of adventure which can be as exaggerated as the author wishes. All these ingredients



are found in *Calico, the Wonder Horse*. Calico is a story of the Old West. It is about a horse who

... wasn't very pretty . . . but she was very smart. She was the smartest fastest horse in all of Cactus County. She could run like greased lightning and she could turn on a quarter and give you back fifteen cents in change. She had a long and sensitive nose. She could smell like a bloodhound. Her nose was so keen she could track a bee through a blizzard.

And along with Calico there is a cowboy named Hank. Calico and Hank made a contented pair of inseparable friends who lived in a contented, happy place. But the happiness was short-lived because Stewy Stinker, the villain, appeared and began to stir up trouble. He and his men were cattle rustlers and hold-up men and all that was despicable in the Old West. After much trouble with the bad men, Hank and Calico triumph in true Western style and everyone lives happily once again in Cactus County.

Boys and girls in the intermediate years like this story with its stereotyped plot and exaggerated action placed there

purposely to entertain and intrigue its readers. It's a tall tale reminiscent of Paul Bunyan and has the same appeal. It is an excellent attempt to show how authors and publishers might work constructively on the problem of comics. It was obviously a difficult book to prepare for publication as Grace Allen Hogarth, Miss Burton's editor, describes in an article in *Horn Book*:

The result of the conference about comics plus the help of Virginia Lee Burton's two boys, Aris and Michael, and the neighborhood children, was *Calico, the Wonder Horse* or *the Saga of Stewy Stinker*. Calico and the villain, who was originally Stewy Slinker, were created at great cost in time and effort. I think I am right in saying that Virginia Lee Burton worked longer and harder on this book than any she has ever done. The rhythm of the many designs that carry Stewy along to the climax of his tale required hours of thought and planning and hard work.

This book, then, is an artistic attempt to do something about the ever-present challenge of comic books to literature of a more effective kind. It is an outstanding effort and might well be emulated by other authors as they seek new means of interesting young readers in literature.



*The Little House*

<sup>1</sup>Hogarth, Grace Allen, "Virginia Lee Burton: Creative Artist," *The Horn Book*, Vol. 19, No. 4, July-August, 1943, page 222.

With *The Little House* Miss Burton reached a summit of her artistic work and was recognized by the Caldecott Award for the best picture book for children published in 1942. It is truly an outstanding artistic creation which is difficult adequately to describe in an article of this kind in which the actual pages cannot be displayed. Perhaps outstanding in the book is Miss Burton's use of color, particularly on the many full-page spreads which so beautifully illustrate the text material. There are the bold, gawdy colors of autumn to help the child see

In the Fall,  
when the days grew shorter  
and the nights colder,  
she watched the first frost  
turn the leaves to bright yellow  
and orange and red.

She watched the harvest gathered  
and the apples picked.

She watched the children  
going back to school.

And on the very next page by tremendous contrast, the child sees winter in delicate blues and whites with just enough red and brown to show the movement of the people.

In the Winter,  
when the nights were long and the  
days short,  
and the countryside covered with snow,  
she watched the children  
coasting and skating.



Here truly are pictures to keep the little child entranced for long periods as he investigates the possibilities of each new page. He sees the dark nights and knows how the little house feels as she sits alone and watches the stars twinkle and flash in the darkness. The child can see the city creeping in closer and closer and shutting the little house away from the things she loves most.



*The Emperor's New Clothes*

So often in outstanding picture books for children, the illustrations shut out the story so that the story is only a weak part of the total book. In *The Little House* the story and the pictures form an integrated whole and complement and supplement each other. There is a very real story involved in this book; it is one which is seen by those who have watched and been concerned with the encroachment of cities on rural areas. In *The Little House* the child can learn of permanence and happiness and the quiet of living.

In this story a little house was built many years ago "way out in the country," where she would "live to see our great-great-grandchildren's great-great-grandchildren living in her." The little house had a peaceful, quiet, happy existence although she sometimes wondered just what city life might be like as people passed by



on their way to the city. Then one day progress reached the little house in the person of a surveyor who immediately brought the beginnings of city life "way out in the country."

Now the Little House  
watched the trucks and automobiles  
going back and forth to the city.  
Gasoline stations . . .  
roadside stands . . .  
and small houses  
followed the new road.  
Everyone and everything  
moved much faster now  
than before.

And so the city encroached upon the land and the little house was surrounded by other little houses, then by apartment buildings, then by skyscrapers, trolley cars, elevated trains, and subways. Then when she had been abandoned and when she felt that things seemed pretty hopeless, she was rescued and moved back to the country:

So they jacked up the Little House  
and put her on wheels.  
Traffic was held up for hours  
as they slowly moved her  
out of the city.

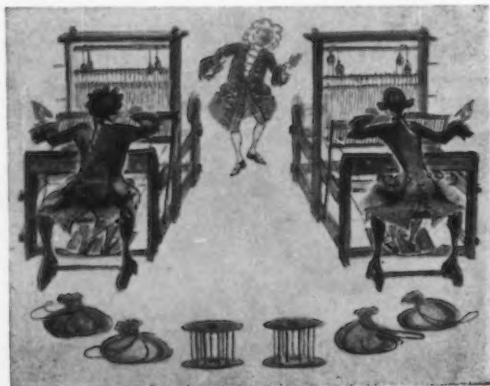
And, at the end:  
Once again  
she was lived in  
and taken care of.

Here is a story for young children which carries with it some of the basic realities of life: permanence in an atmosphere of change, peace and security which is the undergirding for well-adjusted, happy children who will become the people to whom the future must look for happiness and security.

In *Katy and the Big Snow*, Virginia Lee Burton returns to the ever-fascinating

story of a big machine. In this case, Katy is a "beautiful red crawler tractor," with both a bulldozer blade "to push dirt around with" and a snow plow "to plow snow with." The story is the simple one of the way in which the snow plow gets the city back to work after it has been paralyzed by a big snow storm.

Again in this book the illustrations and the text go along side by side. The format is unusual and different from the other books by this author. This is the case with each new Burton book and is a quality which the reader has come to expect. In *Katy* there is an unusual map of the city with red, numbered flags flying from the important buildings. Since many adult maps are built in this way, children are particularly drawn to this page and pore over it as they find in the legend the buildings to which the numbers refer. In all geographical areas which occasionally are likely to receive big snow storms this book will have particular attraction for children who see their own community in the story:



*The Emperor's New Clothes*



and then it stopped.  
One by one the truck snow plows broke  
down

The roads were blocked . . . . .

No traffic could move . . . . .  
The schools, the stores, the factories were  
closed . . . . .

The railroad station and airport were  
snowed in . . . . .

The mail couldn't go through . . . . .

The Police couldn't protect the  
city . . . . .

The telephone and power lines were  
down . . . . .

There was a break in the water  
main . . . . .

The doctor couldn't get his patient to the  
hospital . . . . .

The Fire Department was help-  
less . . . . .

Everyone and everything was  
stopped . . . . .

but . . . . .

#### KATY

Another interesting and different as-  
pect of this book are the wide decorative  
margins which surround each page. These  
are not all merely decorative, however;  
they illustrate and further develop the text  
material on many pages. Again, insight-  
ful parents and teachers can use this book  
to help children augment direct experi-  
ences which they have had.

In her most recent book, Virginia Lee  
Burton delves into an incident in inter-  
esting history as the subject matter of



*Maybelle, the Cable Car*

*Maybell, the Cable Car.* This book is dedi-  
cated to the City of San Francisco and to  
the woman who was most responsible for  
saving the cable cars when they were  
threatened with removal. This book is  
briefly documented and the adult reader

is informed in the foreword of the his-  
torical interest in the cable car.

Next to *The Little House*, *Maybelle*  
impresses this reviewer as the most beau-  
tiful of all Miss Burton's work. She has  
again used light, unusual combinations of  
color which are particularly pleasing to  
illustrate the text material. In some ways,  
the illustrations in this book are better  
than the use of text to tell the story. On  
pages two and three the margin consists  
of clear diagrams of the cable car itself.  
These are important and interesting to the  
children who read the book. The im-  
portance of the cable cars of San Francisco  
is expressed in the following way:

Maybelle and her sisters worked for the  
City.

The City had been so busy growing  
she had neglected her little cable cars  
and they needed a new coat of paint.  
Maybelle was always first out in the  
morning

and last to come in at night.

She loved her City . . . she loved her  
work

and most of all she loved the people.

The book tells the story of the cam-  
paign to save the cable cars and the cele-  
bration of Maybelle when success was  
assured. Here is an interesting story of a  
subject which is unknown to most chil-  
dren. It is told so well with words and  
pictures that all young children will be  
delighted with it.

It does not seem likely that Miss Bur-  
ton had instruction in mind when she  
wrote and illustrated these charming  
books for young children. There are,  
however, many bases for developing con-  
cepts which pre-school children need to  
enhance their development in learning  
to read for themselves. The books are

rich in the vocabulary of occupations, in the activities of people, and in the thoughts of children. Descriptions of things about which children are curious abound in all these stories. In *Choo Choo* is found the vocabulary of trains: tender, conductor, and drawbridge. In *Mike Mulligan* there are steam shovels and diesel engines and caterpillar trucks. In *The Little House* are seen such words as elevated railways, tenement houses, and the subway. In *Katy and the Big Snow* children learn of bulldozers and truck plows and, finally, in *Maybelle* they learn of cable cars and how they work.

In these words and in the many other such passages found in the books, the vocabulary employed is explained only to the degree that the child needs to know in order to enjoy the story fully. Broad meaning is not an objective but rather meaning which affects the story and the life of children at the particular time of their development which these stories serve

In all the books written and illustrated by Virginia Lee Burton, the illustrations constitute a major function of the story-telling art. This is perhaps because the author-artist herself is more interested in the illustrations. She has shown that her interest in writing her own text was originally developed by her interest in illustration because she has said:

An illustrator is guided and limited in choice of subject and scene by the author but I have been fortunate in being able to combine the author-illustrator in one, or rather, illustrator-author, because it is the illustration which interests me more.<sup>2</sup>

These books by Virginia Lee Burton are books primarily for young children at both the pre-reading stage as read-aloud books and in the early years of reading when the child is so eager to read for himself. With these books and an eager audience of Mother or Dad, he will read stories of excitement and pleasure. In *Calico*, Miss Burton enters the interest area of the nine-to-eleven-year-olds where good stories of the right vocabulary and interest level are sometimes hard to find. A large new audience will await her work among the children of this age bracket if she chooses to work with stories in which they are interested.

This article has encompassed the work of Miss Burton only as it is reflected in the illustration of her own writing. She is well-known as an illustrator of the work of other authors as well, but the scope of this article seems better suited to the review of her combined talents as author and illustrator. In every book which has come from the pen and brush of this woman, uniqueness and originality are apparent. Her obvious love of young children and her interest in the things that interest them provide the field of literature for children with refreshing, useful material which will lead children toward a love for good reading which none of the other media of communication can so thoroughly satisfy.

<sup>2</sup>Mahony, Bertha E., Latimer, Louise Payson, and Folmsbee, Beulah. *Illustrators of Children's Books, 1744-1945*. Boston: The Horn Book, Inc., 1947. p. 287.

## Complete Reading vs. Partial Reading

Much unfortunate confusion has resulted from our custom of using the word "reading" too freely in connection with school work. We say that the children "read" their geography, that they "read" their basic readers, that they "read" their arithmetic problems, and so on. In fact, we say the children are reading one thing or another most of their time in school. But at the same time, we say they are "learning to read." Now which are they doing, reading or learning to read?

As soon as we present this seeming contradiction, you will have an answer. "The children are actually reading at one level, but they are learning to read at the next higher level." Quite so. Every child in the room can no doubt actually read at some particular level. And every child should be learning to read at the next higher level. So when we say "read" we mean one level, and when we say "learning to read," we mean another.

To go back to our first paragraph, then, before we say the children are "reading" their basic readers, "reading" their arithmetic, or "reading" their geography, we must decide what we mean by "reading?" Usually we say that when a child "reads," he gets "the author's meaning." But does he get *all* the author's meaning or only *part* of it? To get all the author's meaning he must at least get all the author's words. That is, he must be able to tell what each of the printed words "says," and he must know what each such word means. Specifically, (1) he must either recognize every word by sight or

(2) he must know enough phonics to sound it out, or (3) he must be smart enough to guess it correctly from context or familiar parts. If he cannot get every word, he cannot get the author's full meaning. And if he cannot get the author's full meaning, he cannot be doing "complete" reading.

Many will at once object that to ask for complete reading is expecting too much of children. We should be satisfied, they say, if the child gets most of the words and most of the meaning. He must be allowed to skip or miss a certain amount of the author's message. He must as a practical school matter be allowed to do "partial reading." If we hold to this point of view we should revise our first paragraph and say the child is "partially reading" his geography, etc.

Let us be honest, then, and say "partially reading" when we mean it and say "reading" only when we mean complete reading. Let us be honest enough to admit that many of the children, sometimes the majority of them, *cannot* completely read their readers, their arithmetics, and other textbooks, but can only "partially read" them, because they cannot either recognize all the words by sight or work them out by phonics, context, or familiar parts.

There is one thing every child in any room *can* completely read, however, and that is a book at *his* real basic reading

---

Dr. Dolch is Professor Emeritus of Education at the University of Illinois, and author of many books on reading.

level. If that level is Grade II, he can actually read books for Grade II. If that level is Grade IV, he can actually read books at Grade IV. So if it is important that children in any room actually read, we must provide them with something they *can* completely read; that means books at their true, basic reading level, the level at which they *do* get the words and likewise all the meaning.

More and more schools throughout the nation are making up their minds that every child every day shall actually read. So they provide every day a period during which every child has in his hand a book at his true reading level.

Some persons claim that a child will "learn nothing" during such a "free reading" or "independent reading" period. They lose sight of the fact that only such a period can teach the child two things that come first in all reading: *one*, the conviction that reading can be fun, and *two*, the fluency that makes reading easy and that makes reading true thought-getting, and not word-getting. Children who have an "independent reading period" learn very quickly to *love to read*, and they quickly learn that reading means getting meaning, first, last, and all the time. When they are interested, they *insist* on getting meaning. Only the uninterested child gets words without meaning.

But if children are actually reading only in the independent reading period, what are they doing the rest of the time? The answer is simple. They should not be merely doing partial reading. They *should* be "learning to read at a higher level" by *studying* reading. The basic reader period, in other words, is for most a reading study period. The arithmetic lesson is a reading

study period. The geography lesson is a reading study period.

Many teachers have felt this situation and have ceased to deceive themselves by telling their children to "read" their basic reader and other books usually provided. True, the children whose reading level is above their grade can read the books of the grade. But the children of the same reading level as the grade can do only partial reading. That is, a child who is a fourth grade reader according to a test, cannot "completely read" fourth grade books. A second grade reader cannot "completely read" second grade books. This is a stubborn fact that teachers everywhere have discovered for themselves. A teacher gives a reading test. The child comes out with a certain grade score. The teacher hands him the book for that grade, and he cannot really read it. He can only "partially read" it. The reason is obvious. *The reading test called only for partial reading to get the right answer.*

Let us therefore agree that our work with basic books and practically all other texts is study reading. It is work reading. We must help the children work out the words. We must help the children discover what the sentences mean. We must help the children figure out the important ideas. We must work with the children as they work with the reading matter. After this working, the children will arrive at the author's full meaning, since that is their purpose. And they will have learned a little bit of how to read at a somewhat higher level. But it will be work and not too much fun. It will not make them too anxious to pick up a book in a spare moment. It has been learning to read, not reading.

## Creative Dramatics as a Developmental Process

Creative dramatics in the elementary school curriculum is probably one of the least understood and most misused media through which children express themselves. In determining the values of creative dramatics as a developmental process in teaching and learning, we must relate this medium to the goals and aspirations of the elementary school curriculum. High among these curriculum goals and aspirations are the following:

- Helping each child to develop self-understanding

- Helping each child to relate to the world in which he lives

- Helping each child to extend his experiences in living

In a sense these goals are interrelated but each is also unique and distinct. Each may be explored in seeking values through which creative dramatics contributes to the child's understanding of himself, to his ability to relate himself to others and to the world in which he lives, and to his opportunities to continuously extend his experience in all aspects of living. The teacher plays an important role in making it possible for the child to reach these curriculum goals and aspirations, for she is the key factor in determining the kind of curriculum she builds with her children. To build a curriculum in which all appropriate resources will be utilized to foster the best development of the child, art in all its aspects assumes a major role.

Art is inherently a quality of living which fosters the integration of personality. Its effectiveness is revealed through the behavior of the learner while engaged in a variety of art experiences of which creative dramatics is one. Creative dramatics is an art medium which has high potential for helping the child to become more integrated. If it provides opportunities for genuine expression, creative dramatics helps the child to identify himself and to relate to others, to understand why he acts as he does and, therefore, to better understand the behavior of others. In addition, creative dramatics frees the child to use past experience in making new meanings out of present experience. This, in essence, is the extension of experience in living which education seeks to guide and direct.

A modern elementary school conceives of the curriculum as problem centered, that is, built around the problems children experience in living. In creative dramatics, as in any truly genuine art experience, the child draws upon the meanings he has developed in past experiences to help him solve his needs in the current situation. He not only enlarges upon these earlier meanings, but makes new ones in the process of creating. It can be said that creative dramatics is the process of making meanings which will foster the integration of the child in his world.

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To help the child grow toward his ultimate maturity through creative dramatics, the teacher must be sensitive to the problems of her children, aware of their needs, informed regarding available resources and skilled in creating an environment in which children will be well nurtured.

One of the least used yet most easily available tools that each teacher has to help her study her children to learn their needs is the critical observation of the children themselves which is always possible when teacher and children are together. Looking at children with eyes that see is an attribute of mature and skilled teachers. Such teachers know that while children frequently are unable to verbalize their problems and needs, their behavior always speaks for them. It is essential, then, that the teacher be able to read in the behavior of children the needs and problems, the desires and aspirations which each child is trying to express.

Creative dramatics in the large and broad sense embraces creative or dramatic play initiated by children under any and all circumstances. The five year old, complacently rocking on the playhouse porch in the kindergarten room while others worked busily about her, was not merely "resting." The teacher learned much by observing this child. The gang of ten and eleven year olds "shooting it out" on the playground provided the observer with many clues to ways in which these boys were developing understanding of the concept of right and wrong, and identifying values as a basis for peer acceptance or rejection.

Creative dramatics experiences of a more organized nature provide equally

important opportunities for observing children. The teacher who provides space and time in the school day for her sixes to "play house" can learn much about her children. Such play is usually free and undirected but the teacher has a definite guidance role to play. Susie, a six year old, for example, tenderly putting her doll to bed in the playhouse, tucked it in gently and smoothed the covers, all the time making crooning noises to her "baby." Finally, she leaned over it as if to kiss it good night, but instead, said sharply, "Now, damn it, go to sleep." The teacher who observed Susie at play knew that she had problems, one of developing an understanding of her own mother; another of developing another concept of the mother role; and still another of achieving some security in the mother-child relationship. To experience acceptance and rejection within the span of a single hour involving a person one is completely dependent upon demands powers of adjustment almost more than an adult can bear, yet Susie lived with this experience daily. Dramatic play was for Susie creative and therapeutic. For her teacher, dramatic play provided the clues to Susie's needs.

The teacher who helps her children organize some deliberately guided experiences in creative dramatics has the opportunity not only to observe her youngsters, but to participate more fully as a member of the group. Such planned experiences as role playing to solve problems in relationships may be one form of creative dramatics. The two eleven year olds, for example, who had a fight on the playground over the snatching of a favorite toy were helped in the classroom to see their diffi-



culty in a different light when they exchanged roles and expressed their emotions from the other fellow's point of view. The aggressor who had originally snatched the toy and made off with it felt quite differently about the matter when he put himself in his friend's shoes.

Creating original plays and adaptations from favorite stories are the forms of creative dramatics which are often the only kinds of expression many adults can accept when the term is used. Both of these forms are important but are fostered by other simpler forms previously described. Just as in developing a readiness for reading, many experiences other than the use of books contribute to readiness, so in creative dramatics many experiences in expression and appreciation through creative play or role playing are important. The greatest fallacy teachers of little children evidence, however, is their feeling that pantomime is simple and that therefore it is important that we attempt to have young children pantomime as a first step in creative dramatics. Pantomiming is a difficult art and one which in no sense serves as a first step in the serious business of fostering creative dramatics.

#### **Developing Self-Understanding through Creative Dramatics**

Many related experiences are important in fostering teaching and learning through creative dramatics. Opportunities to experience through other art media are directly related to helping the child express himself through creative dramatics. The child whose feeling for rhythm and tone develops through rich music experience will be more apt to appreciate and be appreciated in his creative dramatic

experiences. The child whose experience is expressed joyfully and freely through color or texture or line will be one whose interest in creative dramatics is usually keen. The children whose teacher shares with them her love of beautiful books and delightful stories is doing far more than helping children to develop an appreciation of fine literature. She is giving them one key to the problem of dealing with emotions. She is also giving them a key to the development of integrating personality when they are encouraged to deal with their problems through creative dramatics.

Sally, whose ill mother has brought about a disruption to ordinary family life, is helped to deal with her problem when her teacher introduces her to Mildred Lawrence's touching story of "Vicky," in *The Homemade Year*. When "Vicky" has to go to her aunt's house to stay, Sally knows what it is like. In creating a play from the story, Sally became "Vicky," interpreting the quality of courage which was to help the real Sally and the make-believe "Vicky" become one small girl able to face her problems.

When nine-year-old Bill gave unmistakable signs of that stage where nothing seems to be right and in order, his teacher shared with him the rollicking success story Ruth Krauss tells in *The Backward Day*. The hero, a boy like Bill, does everything backwards, from dressing with his underwear on top to backing down the stairs. The ludicrous situations help Bill see the funny side of his serious problems. He is a howling success when

Lawrence, Mildred, *The Homemade Year*. New York: Harcourt Brace, 1950 (5-7)  
Krauss, Ruth, *Backward Day*.

his group creates a play from this story.

Michael, attending kindergarten, has almost cleared that stage in early childhood where we seek to identify ourselves—to know who and what we are. When he was a three year old he often "became" someone else for a day or a part of a day. "I am not Michael," he would announce at breakfast, "I am Hallie; call me Hallie." Sometimes it was bewildering to his mother and she was glad as she looked back that for some weeks Michael had decided to be Michael. On the day he appeared in kindergarten wearing a new cowboy suit, however, four-year-old Michael became Hop-Along Cassidy, announcing to all the parents who left their children at the kindergarten door, "Look at me, I'm Hoppy; call me Hoppy." Everyone responded agreeably using only the name "Hoppy" when addressing Michael. Before long, the pleasure left Michael's face; he became anxious and, moving in closely to his teacher, commented with some doubt in his voice, "I'm really Michael, you know." His teacher sensed that Michael's characterization of Hoppy threatened his own identity. At four, the play was too real and too long. While the play involved children, Michael could take things in stride; when it involved grown-ups, his security was shaken. The teacher who would help children develop self-understanding must control or influence factors in the situations in which creative expression thrives. Learning to distinguish the real from the unreal is a developmental task of childhood. Creative dramatics has a role to play in the achievement of this goal but the guiding hand of the skillful teacher is needed.

### Helping Each Child to Relate to the World in Which He Lives

Walt Whitman, in his *Leaves of Grass*, speak of,

The sense of what is real, the thought if  
after all it should prove unreal,

The doubts of daytime and the doubts of  
nighttime,

The curious whether and how, whether  
that which  
appears so is so, or is it all flashes and  
specks?

All living is in a sense an attempt to seek an identity with the world in which we live. The child lives in a fabulous world of changing sounds and smells, of long and fascinating days and short, obliterating nights. These changes in the child's physical world may be a threat as well as a challenge to his imagination. Changes in his relationships with people may be an even greater threat or challenge to his imagination and his well being. Creative dramatics offers keys to the child in determining his relationship to the world in which he lives and offers an important instrument to teachers in helping the child establish himself in desirable ways in his world.

The play corner in the first grade room encourages Billie to become "Daddy" and to be big and powerful, big and strong, or big and gentle. The house-keeping center helps Janie become "Mother" or "Grandmother" as she washes and irons, gossips on the telephone, or berates "Father" before he goes to work. One of the best interpretations of home life as it affects the child is depicted through such free creative play and the wise teacher will "listen in" frequently. In the same way parents will

be helped to see teachers and teachers will be helped to see themselves by listening in to "school play" at home. When Sallie becomes "Miss Foley," her third grade teacher, she tells through her characterization whether or not Miss Foley is kind and easy, gentle but firm, strict but fair, or vindictive and cold. Whatever the characterization, interpretation by the observer should be seasoned with restraint for children, like caricaturists, emphasize extremes.

### Helping Each Child Extend His Experiences in Living

Deepening meaning and shared emotions are characteristic of the extension of experience which creative dramatics stimulates. Creative dramatics is the dramatizing of situations and stories freely and creatively, with the interpretation of roles dependent upon the experience and imagination of the players. Role playing is characterized by spontaneity and feeling. The skillful teacher, concerned with the problem of fostering each child's progress toward increasingly more mature behavior, will use creative dramatics as a process frequently in her teaching.

In an important sense, creative dramatics typifies the "learning through doing" philosophy of the modern school. Robert Browning illustrates the clarification of meaning, the heightening of interest and the emotional appeal which characterizes creative dramatics in good teaching, in his poem, *Development*.

My father was a scholar and knew Greek.  
When I was five years old, I asked him  
once

"What do you read about?"

"The siege of Troy."

"What is the siege and what is Troy?"

Whereat

He piled up chairs and tables for a town  
Set me a-top for Priam, called our cat

Helen, enticed away from home (he  
said)

By wicked Paris, who crouched some-  
where close

Under the footstool, being cowardly,  
But whom—since she was worth the  
pains, poor puss—

By taking Troy to get possession of.

Towzer and Tray, our dogs, the Atreidai,  
—sought

—Always when great Achilles ceased to  
sulk,

(My pony in the stable)—forth would  
prance

And put to flight Hector—our page-boy's  
self.

This taught me who was who and what  
was what;

So far as I rightly understood the case

At five years old; a huge delight it proved  
And still proves—thanks to that instructor  
sage

My Father, who knew better than to turn  
straight

Learning's full glare on weak-eyed  
ignorance,

Or, worse yet, leave weak eyes to grow  
sand-blind;

Content with darkness and vacuity.

In Stefan Zweig's autobiography, *The World of Yesterday*, the author makes a profound observation in recalling the experiences of his childhood and youth: "—only he who has learned early to spread his soul out wide may later hold the entire world within himself." Creative dramatics is a medium which has the potential for helping boys and girls create a *real* world in which it is possible to live in harmony with oneself and with others. It has the potential for helping them create a *real* world in which the infinite holds no terrors, for peace of mind and spirit are living companions. The only possible way we have of helping boys

and girls to become ready for the future is to help them live well and fully in the present. If teachers can help children to develop the know-how and the courage and the spirit to deal well with their

current problems in living, there need be no fear for their future for they will be equipped to deal with the unknown. Creative dramatics is an important medium in the education of such children.

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CARRIE C. STEGALL

## Fourth Graders Write A Book

When school began in September, I searched diligently among my fourth graders for a spark, even a tiny spark, of interest in writing, or as they chose to call it, the study of English. Not even the most insignificant ember did I detect. Copying "old silly sentences" from a textbook and filling blanks in those same "old silly sentences" was the sum total of English, and significantly "that didn't learn anybody anything or do anybody any good."

That view was unfortunate, I told the youngsters, because every class was required to have an English period. What could we do? Some ventured to suggest that we could leave it off and not tell anybody about it. I secretly contemplated the wisdom of that suggestion and was sorely tempted. (I am still wondering if anybody would have ever "caught us" had we succumbed to the temptation.)

Instead, I cautiously asked, "Would you rather write a book than study English?" I was overwhelmed with the spontaneous enthusiasm that swept through the classroom.

"Sure!"

"Yeah, let's do."

"You bet!"

"Oh, boy! Can we?"

"That would be fun!"

As cries of approval spread throughout the class, indifference, boredom, ennui, languor, and listlessness disappeared. And there was I, the teacher, without the vaguest idea of how to begin to write a book, much less to teach thirty-six youngsters how to do so. Nevertheless, believing that a teacher sometimes does her best job simply by staying out of the way of her pupils, I plunged into this invigorating wave of enthusiasm, and after the first breathtaking shock, I found myself engulfed in one of the most delightful teaching-learning-writing experiences of a quarter of a century of piloting youngsters through the labyrinth of periods, commas, and capitals.

Not only did the boys and girls want to write a book, they wanted to write it right then and there. Of course, a few preliminaries had to be pigeon-holed before the fun began.

First, we discussed books we had read or had heard. The discussion was eventually directed to *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* with which the youngsters were quite familiar, since they remembered seeing another class dramatize scenes from it a year or so before. Briefly I told how Mark Twain took a number of boys whom

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Mrs. Stegall is a teacher in Holliday, Texas.

he knew well, rolled them all up into one, and thus created the book character Tom Sawyer. This was possible and easy to do simply because Mark Twain knew boys well, and he also knew life on the Mississippi River because he had lived there.

Second, I opened a discussion about things with which we, as fourth graders, were most familiar. Dogs, cats, and other pets came into our group conversation with dogs holding the priority. Though we planned to follow Mark Twain's lead and "roll all of our dogs up into one" to get our main character, we were forced to choose *one* dog as the physical evidence needed for a tangible beginning. Since my own pet is a little brown Pekingese, I asked if the children would like to play with him while they were deciding. Certainly the suggestion met with enthusiastic approval. Therefore, the following day Brown Sugar, also known as Boy, went to school. It was difficult to tell which enjoyed the get-acquainted party more—Brown Sugar or the children. At any rate the meeting resulted in a mutual love at first sight. Subsequently, the title, like Topsy, "just grewed," *The Adventures of Brown Sugar*.

Thus armed with a dog, a title for their book, and a boundless optimism, these fourth graders were launched upon a sea of high adventure, the two chief purposes of which were merely "to get out of studying English" and to have a surprise for parents at Christmas. (In more scholarly circles the psychologists, I believe, call it "motivation.")

Then came discussions, many periods of them scattered throughout the days that followed, about the beginning of a book. Just how did one go about such a

project? Well, for one thing, the children knew that many books were divided into chapters because they were reading such books. Surely that was as good a way as any. All agreed. But then what?

Here I ventured to ask a question, "What would your mothers do if they were to begin to make a dress or a shirt?" Why, they would use a pattern, the pieces of which would fit perfectly if the article of clothing fit well. Thereafter continued discussions about finishing the sewing a little bit at a time and then fitting the pieces together logically or sensibly. *Anybody* knew that much.

From lengthy and indefinite talk, I finally guided the youngsters into the idea of a Writing Pattern, one in which the pieces fit smoothly and logically. The Outline! Chapter I would naturally be "Introducing Brown Sugar." Six titles of paragraphs, which we felt were necessary to this first "piece of the garment" were (in the order mentioned):

1. Why We Are Writing the Story
2. Describing Brown Sugar
3. How He Came to England
4. His Life in China
5. What He Does
6. With Whom He Lives<sup>1</sup>

These were later rearranged by a vote of the class to this order:

1. Describing Brown Sugar
2. With Whom He Lives
3. His Life in China
4. How He Came to England
5. Why We Are Writing the Story

<sup>1</sup>I think, perhaps, that this construction is merely an echo of my speech because two or three children offered it, and it is *not* their usual form of expression. They acquire many of my speech habits with sponge-like facility.



The original number five was omitted in the final outline because that was actually to be the rest of the book.

Since I was studiously avoiding anything that smacked of "writing old silly sentences," I made no effort to brief the youngsters on how to attack the writing of the first paragraph. We merely discussed Boy's size, his shape, his color, his coat, his tail, his nose, his ears, his feet, and his legs. I wrote on the board all the words they thought they might like to use if they could only spell them. I suggested that they keep a list of the words so that they could refer to them again and again. (This list eventually grew into another book, *My Own English Book*. This book paralleled the novel in its growth, which was nurtured solely by Dame Need.)

When I read the first thirty-six paragraphs, I felt a brotherly tenderness toward old Napoleon. Defeat was more pronounced than at Waterloo! After a careful check, ignoring all acceptable standards of sentence structure, I gleaned three usable sentences:

Brown Sugar is a reddish brown white socked pint size Pekingese that has a little nose like a pumpkin. He is a small long haired dog that weighs about fourteen pounds. He is bow legged and his tail curls up over his back as if he had a Toni in it.

Those were the exact words in all their barbaric beauty. They were from three different papers. The owners copied them correctly according to my instructions, relying confidently on their teacher for proper guidance in book writing. Capital letters, correct spelling, and proper usage of periods they accepted because

they had "heard about them" in the third grade.

Then I combined the three sentences, read them aloud, and asked for criticism. They were simply too good to criticize—in fact, they were perfect. There didn't seem to be enough of it, though. Therefore, all but the three tried again, and one paper came up with: He has a silky back of long hair, and his ears hang down to his feet.

That was it! When this last sentence was added to the first three, paragraph I was complete. We had passed the first hurdle. Paragraph two was as laboriously developed but as victoriously achieved. Paragraph three was prefaced by days of reading from reference books to get some exciting information about the Pekingese dog. Mark Twain had ideas gleaned from his reading. Why shouldn't we? Paragraph four was developed in like manner. Paragraph five was simply the outpouring of feelings about this business of writing. In order to get a cross section of reasons for their entering so enthusiastically into the writing project, I developed this last paragraph simply by choosing its seven sentences from seven different papers.

Thus Chapter I, fulfilling its purpose, was finally completed at the end of the first six weeks grade period. In the eyes of its authors it was perfect. In the eyes of the teacher it was finished! I personally wondered whether that accomplishment was worth the endless hours of paper checking, personal conferences, and constant class discussions which had been necessary to the writing of each paragraph. However, when I hopefully suggested that perhaps this short chapter was not worth the long laborious hours they



had spent in writing it, the youngsters completely shattered all my hopes of escape from the "salt mines." It was such an unquestioned masterpiece that tiresome details which accompanied its progress were completely nil in retrospect. I realized then that I was trapped. I bowed to the will of my slave drivers and then wrote Chapter II on the blackboard. What would we call it?

Discussion followed discussion until all agreed on the chapter title as well as on the paragraph titles within it. I was amazed and gratified at the speed and ease with which this chapter developed. Instead of having to *search* for sentences to combine for a paragraph, I found myself weighing the merits of *one entire paragraph* against those of another. Merely by constantly recalling information learned in the third grade, about half of the youngsters had mastered the art of writing good sentences. They remembered that (1) a sentence should say something, (2) it should start with a capital letter, and (3) it should end with a period, a question mark, or an exciting mark.

By discussing sentences as we read orally from our readers, we discovered that real authors always wrote *interesting* sentences, too. That point in itself was the real difference between the sentences we liked and those we did not like. We liked those that were parts of interesting reading or writing, but we still did not like those "old silly sentences" that we copied out of our English book for no other purpose than to fill blanks. Having arrived at this conclusion about sentence writing, we decided to watch all our reading for suggestions for improving our writing. We might just accidentally learn

more about *how* the experts managed to write so well.

In Chapter II the first rules actually evolved by this simple process of checking the work of the masters. Until now, all punctuation marks, except periods, which had been used correctly were, so far as I knew, completely accidental. Since the project was a secret from the families, I felt reasonably sure that parents had not assisted any of the boys and girls in their efforts. I systematically, in checking papers, left all correct punctuation alone and marked off all that was used incorrectly.

When the problem of the apostrophe arose, we turned to the experts. How did successful writers handle the situation? Examination of reading materials revealed the secret. The following is a minute account of how the children were led to use their reading to develop the rules found in their own personal English books:

I asked the class in which direction the sun rose that morning.

"In the east, of course."

"Where will it rise in the morning?"

"In the east, of course," they answered in superior voices.

"How do you *know*?"

"Well, won't it?"

"Yes, but why?"

"We don't know. Do you?"

"It has been rising in the east every morning of my life, a great many mornings indeed, and I assume it is a rule."

"Why, sure," they chorused.

"Then may I likewise assume if an expert uses the same thing over and over in his writing that it is all right to do so?" I asked.

"Why, sure," one answered.

"Of course," another said.

"Then let me suggest something. As you read, if you see something in your reading often enough for you to make a rule about it, make the rule and present it to the class for consideration. If you can make a rule and *prove* the rule by ten examples, we shall accept it for our English books, and you will receive three extra points on your English grade for such expert sleuthing."

"Oh, good," shouted several.

"That'll be fun," echoed others.

In this manner was laid the framework for rules, and thereafter all traditional textbook rules were left moulding on their dusty textbook pages along with "old silly sentences" and their useless blanks.

Certainly the superior pupils were the ones who pushed the treasure hunt for rules and examples. But when a rule was made, proved, and accepted, the less aggressive pupils were each given one point for further "strengthening" the rule. The weakest pupils frequently gained recognition by such endeavor.

To return to the specific case of the apostrophe. Almost all of the children used an apostrophe with every word ending in *s*. Apparently this was a carry-over from the third grade. Finally, a child discovered that an apostrophe was used to show ownership. This he proved by showing ten uses found in a book he was reading. The class decided that settled the apostrophe question.

Without a word I wrote on the board these words: *don't, can't, isn't, haven't, I'll* and many others. Instantly several

understood that they had jumped to conclusions. Some had even used *that* apostrophe in their own writing. Thus it became necessary to search for another apostrophe rule. This proved no task at all. Several children clamored for the privilege of making the rule. "When we write a short form of two or more words, we use an apostrophe to show where a letter, or letters, is left out."

In like manner all rules, applied in the writing of this book, were evolved, proved, and accepted. These rules the reader may examine in *My Own English Book*.

The reader must understand that this entire novel was written paragraph by paragraph. I firmly believe that one paragraph at a time is *all* that an average fourth grader can master. Much class discussion was devoted to the problem of sewing the paragraphs together neatly and smoothly. Though each chapter was outlined completely before the actual writing began, the children were over conscious of the fact that each succeeding paragraph should flow logically out of the preceding one. There was frequently concrete evidence that the children were quite conscious of this phase of writing.

One day we were beginning a new paragraph. Either we had failed to mention how the preceding one had ended or one of the boys had failed to listen during the discussion of it. At any rate, Billy did not know how the chosen writing of the day before had ended. Therefore, after a few minutes of trying to begin his work, he said, "Mrs. Stegall, what kind of thread did we finish with

yesterday?" When I read the closing sentence, he sighed contentedly and tackled his new paragraph immediately. When I checked the papers, his writing fit perfectly.

Throughout the story there are weaknesses which I could have avoided had I been more interested in the finished product than in the children who wrote it. Twelve or fifteen children alone could have done a remarkable job once they were well launched on the project. However, I frequently chose to omit the work of some of the better pupils in order to use greatly improved work of the mediocre ones. This reward kept the poorer pupils working as it inspired the superior ones to exceed their own efforts.

Also, though the class studiously followed the accepted outline, I often violated the form of a chapter by including in the story more than one paragraph written on the same subject. This was to reward those pupils who had done exceptionally well in writing on that particular topic. Sometimes, two pieces of writing were combined as one. Sometimes, they were entered in the book as separate paragraphs entirely.

Sixteen weeks after beginning this writing project, the children finished the novel—six beautiful, informative, victorious chapters! In typed form it was magnificent! The crowning event was on the day of the Christmas party when I read this great American novel to the mothers. Each child was fully repaid for all the hours of careful writing by the appreciation voiced by their mothers.

Not the least of the benefits derived from this project was the fact that *each child* in the class clamored for the privilege of writing his own—his very own—novel during the second semester. At this writing forty purposeful fourth graders have their own folders, their own outlines, and their own books in the process of being written. Another surprising and wholly gratifying aspect of this second project is that each child is progressing at his own rate of speed, is writing exactly what *he* wants to write about, and is applying all the rules written in his own personal English textbook. Not once have they copied "old silly sentences" and filled blanks. In fact, we have all had a marvelous time *not* studying English this year!

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Robin, three-year-old child of a neighbor and friend, spent the night with us. In the morning he reported, *unmasked*, "I taked a good sleeping!"

After another overnight visit, two or three years later, the breakfast egg placed before him pleased him. It did look good, perfect in form and color. Robin, experimenting, commented, "It has beautiness and taste."

Later, Robin's language will be more conventional. It is not likely to have greater charm, nor will the grammatical forms be as logical.

## What'll We Write About?

New ideas are not easy for any of us. They appeal; we resist. We teachers often do a fine job of dragging our feet as we croak wearily, "Something *new*? Something *else* to learn?" Let's look at ourselves attending a class in the language arts at Teachers College, Columbia University. Well, how are we missionaries of learning doing? We've got our eyes open, but that's just about all. It should have been a wonderful Saturday morning class. Creative writing—what a subject! Make no mistake, Dr. J—, the ever alert, ever resilient teacher was pointing the way out of the jungle of pedantic thinking. Fresh, stimulating ideas were being thrown our way; sparkling, imaginative, humorous and practical they were too, but they seemed to reach only a few of us. Saturday morning fatigue? Perhaps, but the pedantic mood persisted, and insistent, bleak, queries as to where and how, when and when not to, do you or don't you, kept squeezing the life out of the promise of the morning. How to explain this dominant comma-mindedness in the midst of all these provocative ideas in creative expression? Shall we call time out, teacher, for some not too comforting self-examination? Face up now: are we an inspiration or not when faced with that immensely complex but perfectly reasonable question, "What'll we write about?"

Ruth Strickland<sup>1</sup> suggests that the disappointing results in the field of written language in so many of the intermediate grades may be traced back to *empty*

*teaching*, based on time-consuming drills and exercises. "Normally developing children from nine to twelve years of age," she points out, "have a wide range of interests, eager intellectual curiosity, tremendous energy and a vital and insistent urge to be doing all sorts of things. Interest in language itself is keen; so there is everything to work with for rapid growth in interest and skill in written language. Why, then, are the results obtained in so many intermediate grades so disappointing? . . . . . The tremendous emphasis upon textbook teaching is largely responsible." Well, let us restrict ourselves to the field of creative writing, and the reason for failure in this area seems to me to lie deeper than textbook teaching; it lies within the teacher herself. In her effort to teach creative writing, she is all too often (as our Saturday morning class showed) pedantic, punctuation-minded, dangerously hurried and unimaginative in her approach, bless her conscientious and loving heart! Has she forgotten that the first premise of logical, orderly thinking is to go back to the beginning? And what *is* the beginning or starting point in learning how to write creatively? It seems to begin with a state of mind, usually an unsettled state of mind. The average child waits, groping

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<sup>1</sup>Ruth G. Strickland, *The Language Arts in the Elementary School*, pp. 259-60. D. C. Heath & Co., 1951.

mentally. Is it so strange that he doesn't want to plunge at once into the icy waters of creative writing? Not at all, that's for you to do, teacher. It is your job to change the temperature, to make that first plunge attractive so that your student comes back for more. Keep away from assigned topics, your job isn't that easy. Get busy with ideas. Whole clusters of unformulated ideas are locked up in each little head in front of you. Now, drop everything (the children who are not in your writing will do beautifully without you for ten minutes); sit down with your young writers and discuss, elaborate, discard, over and over, and don't worry about the outcome. No pencils or paper allowed until they start reaching for them. Have you found that the quickest way to kill an idea is to put a nice, big, clean sheet of white paper in front of your child? He'll *ask* for it when he's *ready*, never, never fear. This process of thinking, this learning how to play with ideas as a preliminary preparation for creative writing is a slow, difficult process, but without any doubt one of the most profoundly rewarding experiences in the classroom.

Setting the stage for those first, new ideas. How do you do it? What's your formula? I have found three specific approaches to creative writing immensely helpful in getting those young minds and voices all going at once. But first: there is a preface for you to undertake before you can qualify, or measure up to the writing demands of your class. The preface: take stock of your own creative shortcomings; write a two hundred word essay on "The Mischievous Cat." (Well, what about it? Was it easy to write? Was it dead or alive? In any case, I'll bet you didn't just toss it off, did

you?) Now, if we haven't got anything else, at least we've got humility of mind to start our kids<sup>1</sup> off on their venture with words. Here's my I, II, III.

- I. Let's prepare our *minds* for writing, and limber up with words. It's fun, it's exhilarating, it's the essence of pure enjoyment to discover the beauty of a single word in its many meanings. Let the words be *favorite* words, chosen by the children to reflect their own interests and feelings.
- II. Now our imaginations are a lot less sluggish, and much more receptive. Let's start very slowly to explore those hundreds of approaches to what we *might* write about later. (details later).
- III. Keep at this creative writing. Don't let it become either *routine* or an *event*. Creative writing is heavily predicated on serious creative thinking at any given moment in one's life. Train yourself to "write in your mind" about those things which have impact and meaning for *you*. The wonder of wonders is: how expert you become at this wonderful craft of writing as you practice this special kind of creative thinking *in between* writing times.

Now, let's look at the *first* approach in detail, as we examine the possibilities of words. "This is too simple, let me get at my theme writing," you'll say. May I parry with "Do it and see what you get." Let us not be afraid to simplify our thinking, reduce it to the bare bones, in an

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<sup>1</sup>Forgive me if I call these children of ours (including my own son and daughter) *kids*. In some way the word just seems to suggest their wonderful resiliency and humor.



effort to regain a fresh attack on 'what'll we write about'. All written communication, if it is to get its message across, depends on a sensitive and sharply perceptive oral discussion (guided, of course, by the teacher) accomplished in small groups of three or four, in order to stimulate and clarify ideas. *Time to think, time to discuss*, is one of the child's deepest needs when he begins to think in terms of the written word. For, the use he will make of this new found pleasurable word idea, and just how it will fit into the context of what he wants to write is surely a complex, time-consuming, thought-process. How hard it is for adults to understand this, with their precipitous, illogical, non-questioning approach to experiences in thinking! Let's try some of that limbering up with words in rule I. Pick up your fifth or sixth grade speller (or any book containing interesting words); offer any six or eight words to your group and let them choose one. Well, what about these: faith, religion, force, timid, power, weak. Take it easy now, we're not old friends yet. Let's not take them for granted, they can surprise us with their variety of meanings. Ask your kids which word makes a picture in their minds, or which gives them the tiniest of tiny electric shocks. One day I did this with my writing group, and to my surprise a quiet girl, one of my best students and my best story writer, chose *force*. She showed the way and we dug into *force* with excited fury and came up with a thrilling revitalization of the word . . . . . force of character . . . a president . . . Eisenhower . . . . . an air pilot, a sea captain; brute force . . . a mean, hard-boiled, criminal type; forcing you to do something you hated to do (a very familiar experience in the eves of

the average 10-year-old) at home; the terrible force of a storm at sea . . . sailboats, aircraft-carriers, ocean liners battered by the elements; force, energy, power, strength; force that is good, force that is bad; the force of law . . . policemen; the force of speech when a lawyer persuades . . . . . The moment for seizing upon a subject was at hand, but we hadn't even talked about subjects. What'll we write about? They knew now; they didn't need me any more. They were on their own. The wonder and beauty of words are prized by most children. And this feeling for words begins with exploring the impact of words. Help with definition may be needed briefly, but the child can go right on from there choosing those words that appeal to him and illuminate his state of feeling. The great danger of most adult thinking is to accept-too-easily in all matters of definition. "Could it possibly be so," is an expression children use a great deal (scientists too). It is a crystal clear reflection of the open mind. Are things what they seem to be? If we are to get anywhere with teaching creative writing, we should emulate our children's questioning before accepting. Exploring word meaning in terms of the child's own experience, will ultimately produce some very sparkling and gifted writing.

What about our *second* aid in creative writing—exploring the approaches to our elusive topic, whatever that may be. But don't you dare suggest one, teacher. Try to restrain yourself from saying in desperation, "There's *just* the title; now *that* would be really interesting." The decision of what to write about belongs to the children. The avenue of approach is for you to indicate, and there are hundreds of these for the kids to pick and choose



from. For example: does an object such as a painting have meaning? Take a fine color reproduction of one of Goya's children's portraits, such as the one of Don Osorio in his white satin suit and red sash, surrounded by his pet birds and those sinister, predatory cats. Or how about a study in contrasts? Place photographs of the Cathedral of Chartres and the new glass-sided Manufacturers Trust Bank (N.Y.C.) side by side—form and function perfect in each, for the time of each. Now, which speaks to you? Or again, every child, as we know, is a born crusader, a missionary, an inventor at heart. Let him start on a crusade of improvement; how would he change his home, his immediate neighborhood, his classroom? Or what about those exciting kinds of transportation—which to choose—tugboats, trains, airplanes, ships (it never seems to be cars)? Or let him examine familiar states of feeling. How does he feel and what does he do when it's snowing? How did he feel, what did he do on Christmas day as he came down the stairs and saw the glowing, beautiful tree in the corner? Or his favorite possession—what is it, and why does he cherish it? Or why not take any graphic words at random and leave the children alone with them for a few minutes—foaming surf; shimmering moonlight on the back water; gleaming sailboats; dirty streets; ocean liners; dark woods; mountains in the clouds; cooking out; fishing in a rushing brook with the sunlight high up over your head. I have found the best writing will be based on a remembrance of a simple familiar experience in the child's life at home. But in the course of discussion the teacher

*must* help the student to keep this special experience simple and familiar, for in that way he will *enjoy* the writing of it. I believe with all my heart and all my intelligence that you have *failed* as a teacher of creative writing, if your children have not experienced a deep sense of enjoyment and satisfaction in the writing of their stories. When subjects stray from the familiar (we all know from those many writing efforts that were our kids *not-at-their-best*), they become complicated, confused, burdensome, and worst of all the child doesn't enjoy the writing of it. All of us write best about what we know best, or do best. When you and your writers have identified the most satisfying experience for your subject, proceed at once to examine the state of feeling that is most closely related to it. For example, take a favorite subject which has emerged from the thinking of many children: "What I like best in my room (at home) and what kind of feelings I have when I think about it," or "what I like to do outdoors when it is dark and shadowy, and the feelings it gives me"; or "what I like to do first thing I get up in the morning and what I'm thinking about as I do it." States of feeling I have found serve as excellent springboards in deciding what to write about. Notice the bold and happy second grader just beginning to take pleasure in writing for expression. Her approach to a subject is very often through feeling. For example: "how I felt as I walked home in the rain and what pretty growing things I saw on the way"; or "how I felt as I looked out of my window on a cold shivering winter day and saw a poor snowman so cold out there"; or "go away

you noisy, chattering birds and let me think. Your talk, talk, talk drives me crazy."

The subjective approach in the form of a bit of self-analysis may often produce quite a mature message such as an exercise my children imposed upon themselves, in which they had lots of fun making a list of gripes, fears, things about themselves they were proud of, things they were ashamed of, and choosing one of these for their essay. Finally then, keep the thinking fluid as you look for your subject. Let ideas change hands often, and let the child do all his own deciding.

The *third* approach in creative writing, that of making a daily habit out of creative talking, thinking, and writing, sometimes results in a spectacular improvement in your worst student. Mine was Mary Jennings, but more of her presently. All children love to do a *lot* of what they *like* to do, and it's up to us to keep the *presentation* of the *drama* of creative writing bright and inviting, so our kids (and not we) will be the ones to say, "Aren't we going to do some story writing and talking today?" If we term creative writing a complex translation of our own unique adjustment to our home, our school and the life around us, would you agree that the best of your writers are usually those that are your most mature pupils? And wouldn't you agree that there's always a heart-warming exception to the rule? Perhaps it's just this exception of ours that has a special need of this third approach. Mary, my problem kid, just such an exception, became a writer with all the strikes against her

at the start. Somehow the rest of the class and I managed to create (all unconsciously) an atmosphere in which she felt she could begin to tell us about herself in writing. Her home was a meager one, despite its comfortable and luxurious furnishings; her parents both college graduates. Mother admitted she herself "flew into tantrums," "couldn't do one thing with Mary." Sustained love and attention at home was not apparent in Mary's classroom behavior. Irresponsible, loud, aggressive, and on rare occasions, extremely likable, she fooled away her time, disturbed the others, was tolerated but not especially liked by the class, and was for the most part a pretty lonely little girl. But the class helped her inadvertently through its concentration and sustained interest in writing; in the end *they* had something to show for their trouble. Well now, maybe she'd be able to write something . . . she stuck one toe in that cold, cold water . . . not bad, she'd try more. Say . . . writing was kinda fun in some ways except when you got stuck. All of us began to feel proud of Mary's efforts. She'd never be the best, but she was certainly becoming the most enthusiastic. By late spring, she was saying, 'Come on, Mrs. Creed, just give me something to write about, you say what and I'll bet I can write about it.' "Atta girl," yells the class, approvingly. Mary, the class, and I have come a long, long way.

So to sum up, we might say that in preparing children for creative writing, *approach* or *talking about* (rather than *on*) a variety of interests is of infinitely greater worth than limiting one's thinking to one subject or one idea.

# Parents' Opinions of Reading Instruction

## Introduction

Because the concept of the reading process has broadened, and emphasis in reading instruction has changed in recent years, methods of instruction have modified and changed as well. Reading is important in the elementary curriculum, and a great deal has been written about the methods of teaching it, both by professional educators and, more recently, by laymen. With such widespread interest, a clearer understanding of the opinions of parents regarding instruction in reading should be of value to teachers and other school people. This investigation, conducted with the cooperation of parents of elementary school children inquired into several important questions:

How satisfied are parents with their children's ability to read?

What do parents think about the teacher's ability to instruct their children in reading?

What are parents' opinions about present methods of reading instruction?

How do parents rate present methods of reading instruction in comparison to those used when they were in school?

## Procedure

With the cooperation of colleagues and the help of a class at the University of California, Berkeley, a questionnaire containing seventeen statements of opinion was prepared for the parents of 4th and 5th grade children in two elementary schools in Richmond, California. Each statement contained several choices. For example, two questions were:

1. In comparison to other children in his class, I believe that my child is reading:  
\_\_\_\_1) Well                      \_\_\_\_2) Satisfactorily                      \_\_\_\_3) Poorly
2. A child whose reading achievement is low should be:  
\_\_\_\_1) given an easier book to read but kept with his grade.  
\_\_\_\_2) failed in reading and held over a grade.  
\_\_\_\_3) placed in a lower grade where he is able to keep up in reading.

An accompanying letter gave directions for filling out the questionnaires which could later be returned, either signed or unsigned, in a sealed envelope. The questionnaires were sent home with the children. Three hundred sixty four were taken home, and two hundred eighteen were returned, a sixty percent response.

## Results

It should be kept in mind that the results in this report are based upon a

limited amount of data. They represent opinions of a small sample from a selected geographical area. On the other hand, a comparison of the occupations of the parents in this study with the occupations in the nation as a whole indicates the representativeness of the sample. This comparison is shown in Table I.

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TABLE I  
COMPARISON OF OCCUPATIONAL GROUPS\*

	Semi-Prof. Prof.	Clerical Manager	Worker Skilled	Unskilled Semi	Total
Percentage of Questionnaires Received:	19.3	28.9	18.4	20.6	87.2**
Percentage of Persons Employed in the U.S. in October, 1953:	9.2	28.8	13.8	37.0	88.8

The percentage of persons, 14 years or older, employed in urban occupations in the United States in October, 1953. 11.2% were employed in rural occupations.

\*12.8% of the questionnaires were impossible to classify according to occupation.

\*\*U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Census. *Statistical Abstract of the United States*, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., 1954, p. 207.

Inspection of the table reveals a greater percentage of professional and semi-professional respondents and a smaller percentage of semi-skilled and unskilled workers than the percentages of employed persons in the nation. However, professional and semi-professional parents are often most articulate about the schools and the percentages seem sufficiently related to give consideration to the opinions in this study as representative of opinions of parents generally.

Some results of the study are as follows:

1. The responses of the parents indicated great interest in how reading is taught to their children in the schools.
  - a. The responses seemed to be made conscientiously.
  - b. Copious comments were made following many statements whether space was provided or not.
2. Eighty-one percent of the parents who responded believed that their children were reading satisfactorily or well, while only fourteen percent of the parents believed that their children were reading poorly.
3. In statements concerning the ability of the teacher to instruct in reading,

the parents responded as follows:

Seventy-four percent of the parents believed that the teachers knew their children's reading difficulties as well as they should.

Sixty-one percent of the parents believed that their children were getting enough instruction in understanding what they had read.

Sixty-three percent of the parents thought that the teacher was not trying too many different things in teaching their children reading skills.

Fifty-four percent of the parents believed that instruction of the rapid learners was satisfactory or better.

Thirty-eight percent of the parents thought that their children were getting enough instruction in using the dictionary.

Eighty percent of the parents believed that their children were being encouraged to use the public library.

4. The parents tended to call for emphasis on methods that they believed their children needed. For example, most parents who believed that their children were reading poorly called for more emphasis in mechanics of reading—phonics, syllabication, oral pronunciation of words. Parents who believed that their children were read-

ing satisfactorily or well, although calling for much emphasis in mechanics of reading, wanted more emphasis on meaning of words and comprehension

of subject matter. A comparison of the responses of the three groups of parents to certain statements is shown in Table II.

TABLE II  
A COMPARISON OF THE RESPONSES OF THREE GROUPS OF PARENTS

Statement	"my child is reading Well"	"my child is reading Satisfactorily"	"my child is reading Poorly"
I think that more emphasis in phonics would:			
Help my child.....	71%	85%	93%
Have almost no effect on my child.....	25%	7%	0%
The school should give the children more help in:			
Sounding out words.....	58%	69%	90%
Breaking up words into syllables .....	31%	48%	70%
Comparing new words to words of similar meaning.....	32%	24%	10%
Reading to get the meaning from the story.....	42%	50%	33%
Would more oral reading in the classroom help your child?	Yes .....	64%	81% 87%

5. Eighty-one percent of the parents believed that more emphasis in phonics would help their children.

6. Ninety-one percent of the parents wanted the alphabet learned at or near first grade level while learning to read. Only four percent of the parents wanted the alphabet learned in connection with using the dictionary.

7. Most of the parents favored ability grouping for reading instruction. One statement requesting the placement of a child in reading achievement was responded to as follows:

Given an easier book to read but kept with his grade.....74%

Failed in reading and held over a grade .....

Placed in a lower grade where he is able to keep up in reading....8%

Another statement receiving a similar

response asked the parent to place his own child should his reading achievement be low. Eighty percent of the parents wanted their children kept at grade level and grouped with other children of their own reading level.

8. A comparison of opinions among the four occupational groups did not reveal wide disagreement. The professional group was most inclined to favor methods of instruction used during their own 4th and 5th grade school days. As far as the group of semi-skilled workers was concerned, they were most inclined to believe that their children's vocabularies were worse than they expected and to favor methods of reading instruction used during their 4th and 5th grade school days.

9. Sixty percent of the parents in the



study believed that methods in reading during their 4th and 5th grade school days were about the same or better than current methods. Only sixteen percent of the parents believed that former methods were not as effective as methods used today.

### Conclusions and Comments

The conclusions of this study, based upon data numerically treated, register a definite measure of opinion. A comparison of certain conclusions along with a summary of qualifying comments made by the parents gives a truer picture than the numerical values alone could indicate.

Because most parents believed that their children were reading satisfactorily or well, it may appear contradictory that former methods, in comparison to present methods, found considerable support. Adherence to the past, however, did not mean that parents wanted to discard commonly used methods. In fact, the parents supported almost all methods used today. They wanted more emphasis on methods that they believed were valuable and that they also believed were not used enough. In support of phonics, for example, they responded and commented persistently, registering disappointment time and again that phonics had been neglected in the child's school life. While making a comparison between former and present methods, superiority of reading instruction in the past was often attributed to phonics. Parents also commented in favor of other forms of word recognition and oral reading.

Widest actual disagreement with educators existed in the parents' opinions of why and when the alphabet should be taught. Most current reading programs

favor teaching the alphabet after some words are known and some reading habits are established. The parents, in addition to selecting first grade as the level for teaching it, insisted that the alphabet was essential in learning to read. Some parents attributed reading difficulties to lack of training in the alphabet.

Support of the present teacher varied with the issue at hand, but most of the comments expressed confidence in her. The parents showed appreciation for the teacher's understanding of their children's reading difficulties and for her ability to instruct.

Although the parents expressed dissatisfaction with the numbers of children with low reading ability, most of them showed agreement with educators in deciding where to place the slow reader. Over three-fourths of the parents wanted the child kept at grade level and grouped with other children of his reading ability. Many comments indicated that putting him back or holding him over would have an adverse emotional effect on him. But parents also made further exceptions or provisions. They demanded, for example, that a slow reader remain at grade level only if he were doing well enough in other academic subjects. They also wanted additional help for that child in a remedial class or through parent-teacher cooperation where the parent could work with the child in his reading at home.

Although several things may be observed from the foregoing data, one of the greatest values in the study lies in finding out what the parents actually think about reading instruction at the elementary level. Having learned parents'

attitudes, teachers and administrators should have a better basis for explaining purposes and methods, and in many cases, for correcting misconceptions regarding the reading program. Such explanations should include the teaching of phonics and the alphabet, and the school's use of

grouping. A greater mutual understanding should result which would then pave the way for more effective cooperation between the parents and teachers and, thereby, benefit the child learning to read.

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LOIS V. JOHNSON  
AND  
MARY BANY

## Changing Attitudes Toward Writing Activities

It was clear to the teacher in the first days with the new sixth grade class that the group had an attitude of dislike for all activities involving writing. She learned of this attitude in several ways: the children's facial expressions, their spoken "asides" to one another, and their avoidance and delays at starting anything which required the use of paper and pencil.

This class of eleven and twelve year old children was a lively, capable group of youngsters who enjoyed discussions, planning, and working together. Any suggestion of written composition, however, caused a moan to arise, "Do we have to write?" The attitude seemed prevalent in the whole class.

How could this attitude be changed to one in which the children would desire, or at least not avoid, expressing themselves in writing? The cry, "Do we have to write?" had worked its contagion. During these first days of the school year, the teacher faced two facts. One was that

such attitudes are not basically changed by direct approaches or exhortations. It would have little effect to say such things as, "I know you will enjoy today's assignment in writing." The second was that the behavioral changes which were needed would take a considerable time to develop. These changes could not be expected in a month or two, but must be worked for carefully, consistently, and optimistically.

### Releasing usual writing requirements

A first step that seemed indicated was to release the children from too frequent or lengthy writing requirements in their daily program. Such demands were no doubt a part of the children's background that contributed to their present feelings of dislike and avoidance.

For some time the teacher prepared written work that required the children to supply short answers of the one-word,

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phrase, or short sentence type. Other objective-type questions were used also. This procedure maintained the children's comprehension at a good level while not demanding sustained writing.

Individualization was another way of relieving excessive written work. When a letter of invitation from the class was needed, one child was selected or volunteered to write it, rather than asking the entire group to write letters for the purpose. Since only one letter was chosen and sent, the economy of the single letter appealed to the children. Most of the children had the responsibility for such assignments at some time. Fortunately, the children had considerable mastery of letter-writing form, so that group instruction was not an imminent need early in the year and could be left to a later time.

Such procedures helped the children see the teacher as a reasonable person and increased their attitude of liking and trust. This was necessary as part of the total objective of overcoming resistance to writing.

The class enthusiastically joined in the variety of language-arts activities which were provided. Partly it seemed that they needed a broadening of experiences in this area and also it helped improve general attitudes toward the language arts. The teacher hoped to capitalize later upon these experiences, or similar ones, when there was greater interest aroused in writing.

Oral activities were of endless interest. Discussions, panels, demonstrations, and news programs could be handled successfully with a minimum of written work and the notes and outlines which were used were short and not used for

skill teaching.

When the class prepared a Book Week program for the school assembly, oral story-telling was used in making the selections of books rather than written book reports. The teacher assumed responsibility which with another class might have been used for writing experiences. For example, the points to be included in the extemporaneous story-telling were recorded on a chart where they could be referred to by the children. Another teacher-made chart gave the content of the program which had been decided through an oral discussion. The vivacity and enjoyment with which the program was finally presented seemed some evidence that the emphasis on the oral aspects, rather than the written, was succeeding.

#### **Grasping situations having writing potential**

The teacher reasoned that to attain her goals with this particular class she must be ready to grasp situations which would encourage writing whenever they occurred. She tried to be especially alert to the potential for writing within both planned and incidental experiences. Some situations would more easily lead to satisfying writing than would others. Also, she decided that when such occasions came she would be prepared to set aside for the time whatever regular part of the program was in progress. She could always go back to pick up and finish a regular lesson, while a good writing situation was too rare to let slip away.

The arithmetic groups were working when a jet plane roared overhead. The noise was overpowering and it seemed as

if the plane might dive straight into the school building. The children were startled into complete silence and for seconds no one breathed. Then the roar subsided and the plane passed over.

Jim spoke, "That sound is like the ripping of a giant piece of canvas. I've always wondered if it leaves the blanket of air torn and jagged."

Jim's remark caused several children to give their interpretation of the sound. One said, "It makes me think of lightning tearing open a big tree." Another child described the sound by saying, "It sounds as if the earth were splitting open."

The teacher moved to the board and wrote the descriptive words and phrases which the children had given. The children responded to this by adding words and phrases almost too fast for her to write. After the list had been quickly compiled, the teacher suggested that some of the children might like to write something using these descriptive words and phrases. There were no groans at this suggestion of writing. A few children put aside their arithmetic and proceeded to write. Two of the children wrote in verse form.

#### The Jet

Out of the clouds  
With a rush and a roar,  
A fire spitting dragon  
Sweeps the earth's floor.  
The whining shriek  
And cracking sound  
Sends visions of terror  
To those earthbound.  
The sky is split open,  
It makes the earth shake,  
The world stops breathing  
Until it moves on—  
This man made monster  
That makes men quake.

Another child wrote in the same vein about the sound of the jet.

The roaring, screaming, whistling jet,  
Dives toward the earth.  
It laughs at the sound of thunder.  
The noisiest sound of wind and rain  
Is not as loud as the speeding plane.  
It zooms up in one mad rush,  
The sound fades away,  
There is a hush  
And everyone breathes and looks around,  
And suddenly hears new quiet sounds.

In social studies the children were studying community resources. On a field trip through the industrial section of the city, the class stopped to observe a very old tree that had been left standing in a section where there were no trees.

In summarizing the trip, Marcia wrote a short factual account of the old tree. The information was almost identical to that written on the inscription plate of the tree.

Later the teacher made the opportunity to say to Marcia, "The tree seems to have impressed you, since you chose to write about it. What did you think about when you looked at it standing there surrounded by factories?"

Marcia hesitated, and then with only the teacher's interest to prompt her, she gave her reactions to the old tree orally.

I thought of what it must have been like when the tree was tiny. There were other trees to keep it company when the hot winds blew across the mountains from the desert. The sky was blue and not filled with smoke from the city. A breeze rustling the leaves and the songs of birds and crickets were the only sounds. Perhaps once in awhile a group of Indians would walk by on the way to the mountains to gather acorns.

Now the tree is very old and instead of peace and quiet a big city has grown

up around it. The air is filled with the sounds of big city noises. The tree will never be again where birds come and where the air is fresh and clear.

The teacher wrote down Marcia's oral report and typed it. The class became interested in the report when they were asked to suggest a title.

Later in the week Sylvia slipped up to the teacher and said shyly, "When we were driving home through the country last night I saw a tree standing against the sky. The stars were out and it looked as if they were growing from the limbs of the tree."

Sylvia was encouraged to write her impression and on another day a verse was placed on the teacher's desk.

The old gray tree  
Upon the hill  
By day stands lone and bare.  
At night it harbors baby stars,  
I saw them resting there.

#### Giving appropriate recognition to written products

A large silhouette of a tree was cut from dark paper and dominated one bulletin board. On it was prominently centered, first Marcia's report and later Sylvia's verse. This recognition of their writing caused Marcia to bounce with pride and Sylvia, always reserved, to modestly glance many times at the display.

As the year progressed, many ways were improvised to show that the products of the children's writing efforts were valued. The letters which were written by individual children on behalf of the class were usually answered promptly and completely. These replies were eagerly awaited and, when they arrived, were read to the class and then

posted on the bulletin board. In some cases the reply included booklets and pamphlets, and these were added to the display. The responses to the letters of inquiry and the acceptance of invitations to speak to the class were proof to the children that they had handled these written assignments well. This was tangible recognition which they understood.

#### Using high-interest activities involving functional writing

Some school activities have so much appeal to children that they work spontaneously and whole-heartedly to arrive at a successful completion. In such high-interest activities there are usually some writing activities needed and the children's general enthusiasm encompasses this functional writing.

An example of such an activity was the school paper drive. Interest in bringing paper was lagging throughout the school and the sixth grade conceived the idea that they might stimulate some enthusiasm by placing an announcement on the hall bulletin board.

The first notice, prepared by several children working together, read:

Which Room Can Answer These Questions?

How much does ten inches of paper weigh?

If every child in your room brought ten inches of paper, how much paper would that be?

If each child in this school brought ten inches of paper a day how many pounds of paper would it make for one day? For three days? For five days?

When your class decides on the correct answers put them in the box by Room Six. They will be posted on the bulletin board tomorrow.

The questions and answers which



were posted on the hall bulletin board created much interest and caused a congestion in the hall. The class then decided that they would write a daily bulletin which could be sent to each room. They found it could be typed and dittoed in the main office.

General progress of the paper drive was reported daily, as well as stories of interest concerning the collecting of paper.

Because Jimmy Anderson has a broken arm, several boys in Room Four brought ten inches of paper for him. Now Jimmy has a total of fifty inches of paper to his credit, thanks to his classmates Jack, David, Russell, Bill, and Peter.

Mary Lou, in Room Seven, lives in the large apartment house on the corner of Sixth and Main. She would like someone with a wagon to stop by every morning and help her bring the papers. Volunteers see Mary Lou at noon in the cafeteria. She works there.

Jack Sims and Peter Cook printed cards saying, "If you have any old papers you wish hauled away, please call this number."

They dropped the cards in mailboxes instead of disturbing residents they did not know.

So far they have received seven calls and have brought five loads of papers.

After a week of feverish activity, the bulletin announced that the school had surpassed its goal. Interest in the drive

and in the bulletin was kept alive by asking the children for suggestions as to possible uses of the money.

We will have more than enough money to buy the tape recorder.

The children in Room Nine want some new rhythm instruments for the school. What suggestions does your room have for use of the money?

Before the finish of the paper drive, every child in the room had become an eager contributor to the daily bulletin. Because of the enthusiasm of the children in writing the announcements and spurring others to greater effort, the paper drive was a great success.

The problem of helping children develop a desirable attitude toward the many writing situations in their school day as well as in their out-of-school life is particularly difficult with some classes. This task facing the teacher is one of re-education in an attitudinal sense. Some basic changes may be achieved as a result of procedures which release children from the extensive writing requirements of an upper grade program, which capitalize upon experiences which have inherent possibilities for written expression, and which give varied and logical recognition to the products of the children's writing efforts.

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*See the advertising section for the announcement of film-strips distributed by the Council.*

## Perspective on Reversal Tendencies

Strophosymbolia—twisted symbols—is a term used to designate the tendency certain individuals have to reverse letters, parts of words, or even whole words. This inversion tendency is not limited to seeing words in reversed order, or writing letters backward or upside down. "It may be observed occasionally in the very young child who has difficulty in putting on his garments the right way; who fails to remember right and left distinctions; and who loses his bearings within his own home when looking for something he knows is in a certain place." In many clinical cases the condition seems to constitute the only factor involved in being unable to read, to speak, and to write.

The intent of this paper is to show the evolution of thought concerning reversal tendencies in language and to call the attention of teachers to several aspects of remedial work in letter reversals.

There are several types of reversals. One type, the static reversal, comprises the reversal of letters showing right-left symmetry (*p* and *q*, *b* and *d*). Another type called "kinetic reversal" is characterized by a reversal of the sequence of letters, in words e.g., *was* for *saw* (16, p. 356). Still another type of reversal is termed transposition. Eight types of transpositions may be identified (8, p. 161):

1. initial letter to an internal position
2. initial letter to terminal position
3. terminal letter to initial position
4. terminal letter to internal position
5. internal letter to a different internal position
6. internal letter to initial position
7. internal letter to terminal position
8. miscellaneous changes involving several of the others or more than one letter

Kinetic reversals, static reversals, and transposition of words in a sentence occasionally are

associated with facility in mirror reading (2, p. 345). The reader will recall the case of mirror writing as described by Alice in Wonderland, who was puzzled by Jabberwocky in reverse. She related more truth than fiction when she said, "Why, it's a Looking-glass book, of course! And, if I hold it up to a glass the words will all go the right way again."

If we glance back into history we note the case of Leonardo da Vinci whose biography reads like that of a school boy most likely "not to succeed." This genius at mathematics, inventions, and art was a mirror-writer, left-handed, had difficulty reading names, knew no Greek, and could not learn Latin (14, p. 305). "Leonardo was reputed to write his compositions in a reverse script, which can be read only in a mirror—not from left to right, as all do, but from right to left as they write in the Orient. People said that he did this to conceal his criminal, heretical thoughts about nature and God" (3, p. 175).

With the birth of biological sciences, particularly genetics, this type of thinking concerning certain children who have a more or less selective difficulty in learning to read and write underwent a change. Some earlier observers assumed that the reversal tendency was related to a general mental defect and they described such cases as partial imbeciles. "A more or less complete inability to learn to read, particularly when it is associated as it often is with atrocious handwriting and poor spelling, naturally enough would incline the uncritical observer to assume that the child was, if not truly defective, at least not as bright as he should be to accomplish his school tasks" (11, p. 1).

In spite of this prevailing attitude, case re-

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ports of children who were obviously bright in most respects but who could not learn to read or who progressed in reading with the greatest difficulty, came to the attention of authorities. In 1896, Kerr, an English school physician, and Morgan, an English ophthalmologist, published independently case reports of reading disability of children whose intelligence was normal. Morgan considered the reversal tendency a specific disease entity and called it "congenital word blindness." This use was suggested by the similarity between this difficulty and that of persons who had lost the capacity to read because of disease of the brain and who were known as cases of acquired word-blindness. In such cases destruction of a small part of the brain by an injury, a tumor, or a hemorrhage is the cause of a practically complete loss of the power to read (9, p. 132; 11, p. 1; 12, p. 286).

A second English ophthalmologist, Hinshelwood, attempted to divide poor readers into two groups. He restricted the term "congenital word blindness" to the really grave cases of mental defect, which manifestly are the result of an abnormal or pathological condition, and which prove refractory to all ordinary methods of school instruction (11, p. 2). The other group comprises those who are merely slow in learning to read and whom he rated as physiological and hence not as disease cases.

In 1925, Orton, a well known neurologist, aroused particular interest in the reversal type of error so frequently made by the so-called non-readers; he advanced his neurological theory based upon assumptions concerning conflict of impressions made upon the two hemispheres of the brain or lack of, or confusion in, cerebral dominance. In his opinion, the difficulty is not the result of a general mental defect. He found that the condition often corrects itself; and he called this striking tendency to distorted order in the recall of letters, "strephosymbolia" (10, p. 30).

Dr. Orton explains the reversal tendency in the light of well known facts of brain anatomy:

that the right hemisphere of the brain controls the left side of the body, and the left hemisphere controls the right side of the body. It is assumed then that the inactive (or non-dominant) hemisphere is stimulated as freely as the active (or dominant) side and that such stimulation leaves memory traces, or engrams, behind it in the nerve-cells of both hemispheres (12, p. 287). When the right-sided person reads, only the memory traces on the dominant or active side are stimulated. When the left-sided person reads, the right hemisphere is dominant. The individual who reverses letter parts such as *gary* for *gray*, or whole syllables, as *tar-shin* for *tar-nish*, or the major parts of words, as *tworrom* for *tomorrow*, is an example of one who lacks a consistent dominance of one side over the other. According to Dr. Orton, the failure to establish the normal physiological habit of using exclusively the memory traces of one hemisphere may easily result in a confusion in orientation, reversal errors, and hence difficulty in learning to read and spell (12, p. 286 ff).

The idea of word recognition being due to impressions stored up as copies or images or as engrams literally etched in one hemisphere in one form and in the other in mirrored form is unaccepted by most psychologists (5, p. 313). So while Morgan, Hinshelwood, and Orton were trying the first furrow in the field of "congenital word blindness" and "strephosymbolia," several psychologists were cultivating the field from the other direction, and testing the theory that it is natural phenomenon for very young children to read words backward and that they learn to perceive words as adults do as a result of increasing maturity and experience (7, p. 690).

One of the first psychological studies is by Lucy Fildes, whose research shows that mirror or reversed writing is commonly found among young children. She states, "There seems to be no doubt that the tendency to reverse letters is only part of a larger tendency, especially among young children, to recognize forms with-

out apparent heed to the position which they occupy in space" (4, p. 57).

Another study is that of Nila Banton Smith. She investigated the ability of children to select from a number of letter symbols that one which was identical with a sample shown by the child. Dr. Smith found that her brightest group showed the least confusion and made the fewest errors; the average group had more difficulty and made more errors in matching; and the slowest group made some kind of error on every letter in the alphabet (13, pp. 569-571; 15, p. 82).

A later study which indicates that the tendency to confuse form and position is not a "sporadic abnormality" is that of Gertrude Hildreth. In her study of reading and writing reversals of public and private elementary school children under standard test conditions she found a decline in frequency of the tendency in higher as contrasted with lower grades. Also she found that the number of reversals made by children declines from grade to grade with no attention to reversal elements as such (6, pp. 1-20). Interestingly enough, she found that laws of association and configuration explain many reversal errors. Her evidence prevents a conclusion that reversal tendency is a cause of poor reading.

Confirming the work of Smith and Hildreth, Kennedy in a recent study concludes that the tendency to reverse and confuse symbols is perfectly normal in the earliest grades and that it is equally normal for the tendency practically to disappear as the child progresses through the first several grades (8, p. 169).

The question may arise as to what the teacher should do when the tendency exists in the very early grades. The question might also be raised as to what can be done when the tendency persists. The first question may be answered in this wise: certain educational experts advise that we just wait until "certain general and specific maturations have engendered a condition in which reversals are few" (1, p. 98). The second question may be

answered by reporting that remedial instruction involving controlled stimulation of unilateral eye coordination can be provided through the employment of a conditioning device now available. Its trade name is the Hand-Eye Coordinator; and it is manufactured and distributed by Keystone View Company, Meadville, Pennsylvania. Research has proved that this device is "an effective therapy in the elimination of reversals and frustrations with resultant improvement in the functional skills of the several language arts" (9, p. 141).

The evolution of the attitude toward reversal tendencies in reading and writing is a fascinating story. The evidence seems to indicate that in the course of the centuries this tendency has been associated with heresy, with imbecility, with cerebral imbalance, and finally with normality—in cases where the tendency practically disappears, and where the tendency may be corrected by a technical device. *Mirabile dictu!*

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## Dramatic Role Playing and Book Making In the Library

Dramatic role playing has proved to be the starting point for three interesting kinds of development in two elementary school libraries: understanding of what goes into the making of a book, creative writing, and drawing, and strong curiosity about the functioning of a library. The last-named of these will be discussed in a later article.

The experimental work was begun with two fourth grades at the University Elementary School Library on the UCLA campus, and with the pupils in several fifth grade classes at the Mark Twain Elementary School in Long Beach, California.

The introduction to dramatic role playing was made by asking various questions of the group when they came to the library for their regular period. "What people are needed before you can have a book?" and "What do these people do?" A discussion followed which gave the children an opportunity to find out

the relationships between the author, the publisher, and the illustrator, and what each contributes toward the making of a book.

The children were asked which of the three each would like to be: author, illustrator, or publisher. And here the idea developed quite differently in the fourth grades at UES from the way it progressed among the fifth graders at Mark Twain.

The fourth graders who chose to be authors went to one table, upon which an "Author" sign was now placed; the illustrators went to another marked table, and the publishers to a third. Pencils and papers were distributed, and it was suggested that the authors write down either the beginning of a story or an idea for one. The illustrators drew samples of

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their work on any subject they chose, and the publishers, with some guidance from the librarian, went over their functions including the important one of editing manuscripts; they discussed the types of stories they thought it might be profitable to publish, and some of them made up contract forms to use with authors and illustrators.

As soon as an author had an idea of a story down on paper, he took it to the publisher of his choice. The publisher read it, rejected or accepted it, with or without suggestions for change or development. There were lively bits of conversation such as, "It's not exciting enough. You'll have to make more things happen," and "There are too many horse stories already. I don't want to publish yours—it's like the others," and "That's keen! I'll publish every story you write."

When a publisher accepted a story, he took it to the illustrators' table (the author usually accompanying him). There he looked at the samples. Publishers were heard to say such things as, "Do you think you can draw baseball players?" and "Anyone looking for a job?" and "Read the book, now, before you draw the pictures!"

At the end of the period some pupils wished to take their work home to finish; one teacher said they might complete their work in the classroom; some children left it in the library to continue the next time they came. Remarks at the door as they left included, "That was fun," and "Can we do it again?"

At the next period devoted to dramatic role playing, several pupils had finished their stories. These were read aloud to the class and criticized briefly. The

authors had not had the artists illustrate them, nor had the publishers made arrangements, for this seemed difficult for them outside the library. The work during that library period continued somewhat as before; but now the publishers were not sufficiently occupied. When several of them discovered that publishers sometimes write books, they were delighted, and began at once.

At the next period the children discussed how a story with illustrations might be made into an attractive book. They decided to use construction paper for the cover, with a folded "spine" of a contrasting color, held together with acorn fasteners.

At the fourth period devoted to book making (about six weeks after the first), one girl brought in a fairy tale, *Alfred and the White Bear*, which she had written, illustrated, and published too. The pupils were extremely enthusiastic about it. They decided that the book should be displayed on the library bulletin board for a week, then shelved and circulated.

After this, completed books came in nearly every week during the rest of the semester. Some children did as many as three, in each case illustrating and publishing their own manuscripts. Every book was read aloud, and, when deemed worthy by the class, displayed and circulated. The satisfaction of the pupils whose books were liked was intense—and the children were generous to their classmates. Some of the books continue to receive favorable comment from adult visitors to the demonstration school library.

At the Mark Twain Elementary School fifth graders participated in dramatic role playing. At the first meeting

the makeup of books and the part that the author, illustrator, and publisher play were discussed. The pupils became enthusiastic about seeing whether they could duplicate these roles. They decided to bring samples of their writing and drawing to the next class library period. They also voted to act as a Board of Directors which would evaluate all work to be presented.

At the second meeting stories and pictures were evaluated by the class with respect to style and content. As a result, decisions were made by popular vote upon which pupils were the potential authors and who the promising illustrators. Those who could do neither of the artistic tasks became publishers.

Each author chosen was to write a story. Each publisher talked with an author, and then selected the illustrator he felt would do the best work for the particular book being planned.

During the period when the authors and illustrators were busy, the responsibilities of publishers were discussed at great length: the business of giving assistance and of editing; the designing of books; whether the illustrations for a particular book successfully carried out the idea of the author—all these were touched upon.

Stories which became finished books were read aloud to the class. Makeup, illustrations, the quality of the story, and the editing were discussed by the entire group. The children became more impersonal and more skilful in evaluation during the ten weeks of one twenty-minute period a week. The semester ended with a feeling of satisfaction and an increased understanding of what cooperation means.

In the several classes involved in the two elementary school libraries, the books produced were upon such factual subjects as birds, boats, flowers, bull fights, and electricity. The stories were about animals, sports, the circus, the family, and the land of faery. Illustrations were done in pencil, ink, crayon, and water color. A few books were typed by relatives, but most of them were copied out carefully by the authors themselves from the corrected manuscript.

In reviewing the work at the end of the semester, it seemed to us that the fourth grade project had satisfied more of the needs of the children as individuals, while the fifth graders learned more about working together. Among the latter the feeling developed that each member of the group had his own special abilities which could contribute towards a common goal—the making of books.

## Can Parents and Teachers Cooperate in Children's Use of Television?

Television as a medium of communication is now practically a standard part of the American home. It is accessible to the majority of elementary school children, and the most sensible approach to its use will result from a cooperative study between parents and teachers. One elementary school faculty interested in the educational value of television and the best way in which to regulate children's use of it made the following study.

In a public elementary school of 623 children and twenty-one teachers the principal approved an investigation of the children's use of television. A simple questionnaire containing seven basic items relating to the availability of television sets, the amount of time spent in television, the favorite programs, and the parental supervision, was used by the teachers to gather the data. On the primary level, the teachers assisted the children with their responses, but on the intermediate level the children answered independently. The number of children interrogated and their grade level are shown in Table I.

TABLE I  
NUMBER OF CHILDREN  
BY GRADE LEVEL

Grade	No. of Children
First .....	141
Second .....	154
Third .....	102
Fourth .....	82
Fifth .....	86
Sixth .....	58

The children on the primary level far outnumbered those on the intermediate.

This added to the value of the study on the local level because most of the parents were those with younger children, and these children would presumably remain in the same school from at least three to five years.

Whether television was a luxury or an ordinary accession to the homes represented in this school was basic to the study. With this information parents and teachers had a common meeting ground and a lead to home and school relations. Five hundred and sixty-four children, or ninety-one per cent of the total school population, had television sets in their homes. This left only a small percentage who were not necessarily deprived, but who did not have sets in their homes at the time of the investigation. The faculty knew from this that television as a medium of entertainment and education was there, and their common concern was how the children used it.

Proceeding from the premise that ninety-one per cent of the children had television sets, the writer was interested in seeing how regularly they viewed programs. Eighty-five per cent of the total group viewed television daily. Broken down to the different levels this meant that eighty-four per cent of the children between grades one and three and eighty-three per cent of the group, grades four

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through six, made daily use of television. This information showed the teachers that potentially they had an asset or a liability to their teaching, and the amount of time spent in daily televiewing would be a clue to its function in terms of educational objectives.

The children in this selected school spent from one to six hours in daily televiewing, the average being four hours daily. The primary children spent more time before the screen than did their older brothers and sisters. Their time averaged five hours daily. This could hardly be considered anything but a competition to the work of the school. The fact that children spent five hours in the classroom and spent approximately five hours televiewing is worth examination. From which five hour period will they derive the most profit? Will one experience act as an interference to the other? Every teacher knows that five hours of televiewing for the elementary school child means that some part of the late evening or night must be so spent, and five hours represent ten half-hour programs. Are there ten worth-while programs for children? Here the parents and teachers can cooperate to determine the educational value of so much commercial entertainment. Incidental to the study the faculty found by informal questioning that the children in the intermediate grades, ages nine through eleven approximately, gave less time to televiewing because they had other out-of-school interests. These were:

- Playing ball after school,
- Holding membership in Scouts, Cubs, and Brownies,
- Taking dancing or music lessons,
- Doing home work.

It was obvious from this listing that the older children had acquired these interests either in school or at parental suggestion, and they could certainly be considered more constructive than passive enjoyment of television. The primary teachers know that interest in hobbies and games can be fostered from the first grade up. There was an apparent lack of any transfer of interest in the situation under investigation, as commercial entertainment seemed to claim the younger children's time exclusively. Here again is a fertile field for home and school harmony and cooperation.

Accepting the fact that the children were spending from three to five hours before the television, screen the teachers were interested in knowing how much parental supervision or guidance was behind this. They made the appalling discovery that eighty-five per cent of the children on the primary and sixty-nine per cent on the intermediate level had non-guided use of television. In other words, the parents were indifferent to or at least neutral toward the children's use of television. This can hardly be considered the *desideratum*, and parent education through school bulletins, lectures, and conferences could be built around the educational use and parental supervision of television programs.

Children's preferences in programs could be a good lead to the integrating of likes with educational objectives. The following tabulation ranks the preferences of the intermediate and primary levels as they were derived from the present study.

Western, comedy, and detective programs were listed as the three top choices of both groups, but not in the same order.

TABLE II  
PREFERENCES OF PRIMARY AND  
INTERMEDIATE GRADE CHILDREN

Primary	Intermediate
Western	Comedy
Comedy	Detective
Detective	Western
Quiz	Sports
Sports	Drama
Religious	Music
Drama	Religious
Music	Quiz

The intermediate group ranked comedy first while the primary ranked western. Detective programs were second for the intermediate and third for the primary. The possible explanation of these differences might be found in the ages of the students. However, the fact that there are differences shows that there is a possibility for the school and the home to cooperate in the cultivation of correct tastes. The preferences of children are flexible and will yield to guidance and direction. Drama and music ranked higher with the intermediate children, and here again the teachers have an opportunity to direct children's selections. Are the primary graders looking at western, comedy, and detective stories purely for recreation? And if so, is this the best type of recreation? These questions can be very provocative in the local parent teacher meeting.

Television led in entertainment in the present investigation. How did other types of recreation common to childhood rank with it? The answer as obtained from 564 children is shown in the following table.

Interestingly enough the outdoor sports ranked first with the intermediate group and third with the primary. Perhaps participation in organized games

TABLE III  
RANKING OF TYPES OF RECREATION

Primary	Intermediate
Television	Outdoor sports
Movies	Television
Outdoor sports	Movies
Comics	Books
Books	Comics
Radio	Radio

and knowing how to play them would explain this. However, the fact that television and movies are liked best by young children should alert parents and teachers to the need for directing the primary child to something more beneficial than commercial entertainment. Whether the children currently in the primary grades who are selecting commercial entertainment as the most enjoyable will grow up confirmed in these preferences is a serious issue.

The place assigned to books is significant to the teacher. The emphasis placed on the teaching of reading in the primary grades is relevant to this. The teaching of reading includes recreatory reading. There is no dearth of attractive books for children on every grade level, and teachers should try to encourage reading beyond the basic text. Hence the ranking assigned to books in the present study was rather discouraging. Parents can cooperate with teachers by providing books in the home and thus direct the child's interests into something more profitable than "looking" at television.

What are the possibilities for home and school cooperation in local investigations such as this one? First, the principal and the faculty become conscious of the *status quo* in the school regarding the existence of television sets and the



amount of time children spend before the screen. With this information they are sure of how children spend the majority of their out-of-school time, and without scientific experimentation they can detect interferences or obstacles to their work as educators. They also become alerted to the possibilities of using this medium as an ally since it would be too sanguine to expect children to discontinue the use of it.

Secondly, through parent teacher meetings and conferences the attitudes of both groups can be shared and discussed. Parents can give their views on the use of television in their home routine and their reactions to its guided use and to a proper balance between it and other activities. They can see when television can be excessive and detrimental to the child's general welfare. They can recognize the need for their interest and support if hobbies and interests begun in school are to be transferred to the home situation.

Thirdly, by means of parent education, bulletins, and lectures the proper proportions between school work and the use of television can be ascertained. The importance of reading and the parental

responsibility for procuring books on the child's level can be established. The need for physical exercise, games and outdoor recreation for the primary child can be emphasized.

Lastly, teachers and parents come to recognize their responsibility for seeing what the children are seeing. If children have preferences, let the parents and teachers share them, discuss the programs and suggest or direct their interests. If teachers and parents are unfamiliar with the tastes of children they are failing in their duty of vigilance and are losing a fine opportunity to educate. There are inherent possibilities for home and school cooperation in the education of the children when a study such as this is undertaken on the local level. Bringing the use of television from an abstract generalized topic down to the immediate situation helps parents and teachers to accept television as a permanent addition to our society, and it makes them conscious of its educational possibilities. The home and the school can work cooperatively in guiding their children's televising just as they work cooperatively in their other vital physical, mental, and spiritual needs.

LOUISE HOVDE MORTENSEN

## Teaching Narrative Writing

The current Lewis and Clark Expedition cartoon strip could be copied as an example in teaching narrative writing. In about ten illustrations, an incident of the expedition is set out with a paragraph to explain the progress, besides the conversation of characters in the "balloons" with the pictures.

For instance, Chapter 24 has a paragraph: "In the summer of 1806, three parties were heading for the country where the Yellowstone meets the Missouri. In the north, Capt. Lewis was pushing down the Missouri. To the south, Capt. Clark was bringing a larger party down the Yellowstone. Sgt. Pryor was traveling

overland with Clark's horses. Indian horse thieves sneaked on Pryor's camp one night and made off with their horses."

Some of the conversation is, "It rides fine. We'll make it easy, lads!" "Horse thieves raided us, Captain!" "So they have gone on ahead. We'll be meeting soon." "An Indian ambush!" "No Injins, Cap'n. Just pore blind Pete."

Besides historical episodes, book reviews can be condensed as if they were to be made into cartoon strips.

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# A First Grade Teaching Unit on the Farm

## A First Grade Teaching Unit on the Farm

### I. Objectives:

1. To help the children develop a realization of our dependence on farms
2. To make the children realize how important the farm is to them
3. To help the children develop a curiosity about living things by studying the life on the farm
4. To learn information about,
  - a. the types of farm buildings and kinds of animals
  - b. the types of farms
  - c. the work done on the farms

### II. Initiating Activities:

1. Read a story to the children. A good one is Lenski's *The Little Farm*. Discuss the story after reading it and talk about some of the things that the children would like to learn more about. Some of the questions might be:

- a. Are chickens always white?
- b. What does the farmer do in the winter?
- c. How many babies can a pig have at once?
- d. How many babies does a cow usually have at a time?
- e. What is different about a rooster and a hen?
- f. Why do pigs lie around in the mud?
- g. Does anyone help the farmer with the work?
- h. Does the farmer use a great many machines on the farm?

- i. Do all cows give milk?
- j. Do all cows have horns?
- k. Where is the hay put?

1. What are the buildings used for? (This is a general question and the children would probably be more specific. They might ask—what is the building with the corn in it? What is the tall thin building?, etc.)

Then a discussion could follow on how to pursue the answer to the above questions.

2. Visit a farm with the children. After deciding on the things they want to learn about the farm, the children could visit a farm. (Language Arts skills could be used here. Be sure to have the children write the farmer a note asking to visit his farm and then a thank you note after the trip has been completed.)

### III. Developmental Activities:

1. A discussion could be carried on about the different kinds of farms;
  - a. Where the farms are located and the purpose of each type of farm
  - b. The different types of buildings found on the farm and the use or purpose of the building
  - c. The animals, their babies, and the work they do for the farmer
  - d. What work is done on the farm
  - e. The things that are fun on the farm.
2. (a) After visiting the farm, the

Miss Mitchell is a teacher at Arlington Heights, Illinois, Public School.

children would enjoy making animals out of clay. Also they might enjoy making the various buildings found on the farm and putting them together as a diorama on a table. (Here again, they would enjoy having other children visit to view the diorama. Signs could be placed outside the room inviting others in and/or invitations to certain rooms could be written by the children.)

(b) The children love to make murals and would probably enjoy painting or making a cut-paper mural.

3. While the discussions are being carried on, the teacher could be writing sentences on the board about the things being discussed [sentences dictated to the teacher by the children.] Then the children could make an individual farm booklet or a group farm booklet. (Included in the booklet could be pictures they found in magazines or drawings of their own that would illustrate the buildings, animals, types of farms, work and fun on the farm.) If a group book is made, each child could have a turn writing a page about some phase of the farm. The group book could also have pictures in it that were found in magazines as well as ones that the children had made. (This book could be read later to visiting classes to show them what the room had learned about the farm.)

4. Besides the language arts activities of writing the invitations and making booklets, the children have a wide selection of books to read containing farm stories.\* To develop a larger reading vocabulary about the farm, they should be expected to recognize certain animal names and building names. Some of the

children could read short farm stories to the rest of the class.

5. In numbers, pictures of animals could be used for practice in adding things. Use of the flannel-board with some animals would work in very nicely with this also.

6. Other media for use in a better understanding of the farm are films and also filmstrips. These are excellent teaching aids as the children enjoy them immensely and as a result concentrate on them.

7. Music, of course, is loved by the children and they especially enjoy singing about animals. Also various records and rhythm activities could be worked into this nicely.

8. There are many good poems on farm animals and fun and work on the farm. The children might enjoy making a poem booklet and illustrating the poems.

#### IV. Culminating Activities:

1. As a culminating activity, the children might enjoy making a box movie about fun on the farm (a group of stories and pictures made by the children and put on one long sheet of paper and then attached to rollers and turned by hand by one of the children.)

2. Or they might enjoy making a play together and using puppets to act it out. (Again invitations to the other rooms could be written.)

#### V. Evaluation:

1. A list of words on mimeographed sheets could be made and certain ones pronounced to the children as a vocabulary test.

2. Also, reading some stories with the

\*See Bibliography

vocabulary in it that the child should know could serve as another testing device. This would include checking on how well the child reads and remembers the details of the story after reading it silently.

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# The Educational Scene

Edited by WILLIAM A. JENKINS<sup>1</sup>



William A. Jenkins

## Windowless schools?

A bit afield from our usual primary interest of new developments in the language arts area, but important enough to permit our going on a tangent, is an idea which came to us from the Rochester (N.Y.) *Democrat and Chronicle*, by way of the October *Educational Screen*. In a piece titled "Would Windowless Schools Be Better?" the editor of the *Democrat and Chronicle* jogged our mind by asking, "Are we really planning our schools for our future generations? Or, are we foregoing imagination and vision to wrap ourselves in what may be the false security of yesterday's thinking?"

In a series of specific questions, pointed enough to be professionally embarrassing, the editor asks whether school boards and architects are paying lip service to the future but gearing their thinking to the nice, safe, conservative past? In this atomic age, he wondered, how many school boards have written to the Civil Defense Administration to ask which type of construction would withstand an atomic blast? The case in point is our new, greenhouse-type of school with its acres of glass. The *Democrat and Chronicle* asked whether or not it could become a deathtrap in any type of explosion.

The answer is implied in other potent arguments for a windowless school, where health and education are one and the same. In such a school air conditioning would keep the temperature constant throughout the year; washed and sterilized air would reduce the number of costly respiratory diseases; pupils' attention would not be lost to a passing truck; the chore of maintaining proper light and ventilation would be gone forever; and total darkness for audio-visual work could be had at the touch of a switch.

In another key, the editor asked, "Is your district planning the construction of a huge,

little-used auditorium at a cost of thousands of dollars?" Again, the answer comes from questions: "Couldn't that money be spent better on a small forum equipped with closed circuit television so youngsters could attend assemblies without leaving their seats? In the last analysis, isn't that big auditorium just a place to hold graduations—which could be held better outdoors, anyway? Wouldn't a small forum seating about 250 people serve most community purposes? Couldn't a gym be used for those functions attended by more than that number?"

The *Democrat and Chronicle* jogged our thinking. We even found it embarrassing to be so shortsighted professionally. *Et tu?*



## Send for

*Paperbound Books in Print*, Fall of 1955. An index to 4500 inexpensive reprint and original titles, listed by subject and author. Of special interest to elementary teachers and librarians will be the section on "Juveniles," about 125 fiction titles and 75 nonfiction works. Order from R. R. Bowker Company, 62 West 45th Street, New York 36. Price, \$1, or \$2 for three editions per year.

\* \* \*

The fall 1955 record catalog, including a large collection of authentic folk music on LP recordings. Order from Folkways Record and Service Corp., 117 West 46th Street, New York 36.

\* \* \*

Young America Films' new filmstrip catalog of 570 strips. Order from 18 East 41st Street, New York 17.

\* \* \*

*Directory of College Courses in Radio and*

<sup>1</sup>Wisconsin State College, Milwaukee



*Television for 1954-55*," compiled by Gertrude G. Broderick, Education Specialist of the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. The pamphlet identifies existing facilities for careers in the broadcasting field. Eighty-one colleges give radio or TV majors leading to graduate or undergraduate degrees. For a copy of the Directory, write to Mrs. Broderick at Washington 25, D.C.

\* \* \*

*Tape Recordings for Teaching*, from Fort Orange Radio Distributing Company, 904 Broadway, Albany, N.Y.

\* \* \*

The 1955-56 Eye Gate filmstrip catalog. Order from Eye Gate House, 2716 41st Avenue, Long Island City 1, N.Y.

\* \* \*

A manual on planning effective TV programs, compiled by the University of Alabama TV staff. Subjects covered include TV scripting, selection of talent, equipment and its basic functions, sample scripts, and copyright and legal problems. Copies are available without cost. Write to University of Alabama, University, Alabama.

\* \* \*

A catalog of filmstrips produced by 21 companies, arranged by subject area; a catalog of record players and record albums. Order from Stanley Bowmar Company, 12 Cleveland Street, Valhalla, N.Y.

\* \* \*

*Box Score on the UN 1954-55*, prepared by Robert H. Reid. A poster-size, two-color folder giving the UN's stand on 22 problems, what happened, and how things stand now. Order from the NEA, 1201 16th Street NW, Washington 6. Price, 10 cents; quantity discounts.



### New Enrichment Records

Four additions—two records—to the Enrichment Records series have been released by Enrichment Materials, Inc. (246 Fifth Avenue, New York 1). Based on the popular Landmark

Books, published by Random House, the four latest releases are *The Louisiana Purchase*, *The Pirate Lafitte*, *Mr. Bell Invents the Telephone*, and *George Washington Carver*, based on books by Robert Tallant (the first two titles), Katherine B. Shippen, and Anne Terry White.

*The Louisiana Purchase* takes up the negotiations between Jefferson and Madison and Napoleon and Talleyrand. The story moves from the Spanish ownership of New Orleans to Napoleon's decision to sell the territory.

*The Pirate Lafitte* records the conflict between Lafitte and Governor Claiborne, and the battle for New Orleans.

*Mr. Bell Invents the Telephone* takes us from his idea to transmit speech across wire by electromagnetism to his success with the telephone.

*George Washington Carver* follows the life of the great humanitarian and scientist from his reporting as a penniless student at Tuskegee Institute through his amazing experiments with the peanut and sweet potato.

For variety in reviewing these records, we decided to preview and review them with a class of advanced elementary teacher trainees. Their very critical judgments have in some cases been toned down by our more practical knowledge of quality and availability of recordings of this type.

The students felt that *George Washington Carver* was the best of the four sides because of the sympathetic portrayal, evenness of script, and unobtrusiveness of musical background. The poorest recording, in their opinion, was *The Pirate Lafitte*, which contained dialogue read too fast to be understandable; "noise" to indicate masses of people, and again to represent action; too great a presupposition of historical knowledge, and too great a reading problem for any one actor—the mixing of French and southern accents. The other two recordings were rated "good" by the students.

All of the students felt that the organ music detracted from the recordings (have

they negative conditioning to "soap operas"?) by being uneven, abrupt, and commercial. They felt that the treatment of dates was heavily pedagogical, and that the choral background did not always advance the narrative.

On the positive side, they were quick to claim that incidents in each record were vivid, that the records certainly could make history more realistic and interesting, and that they could be a good supplement or substitute for dry history materials.

As with past issues in this series, we again feel that these recordings are very good, the best of their type which is available. Teachers will find them helpful, and their pupils will like them and be motivated by them. They are accessible, accurate, relatively inexpensive, and believable.

Enrichment Records are sold in sets of two 78 rpm or one 33 1/3 rpm LP recordings. Order from Enrichment Materials, Inc., 246 Fifth Avenue, New York 1.

### Why your pupils can't spell

In an amusing and informative article in the *Saturday Review* some time ago, Harvey Kinsey Boyer discussed spelling reform. The need for reform, and one reason your pupils can't spell, can be seen in his list of the different ways to designate the long "A" sound:

toda (as in aerial, aorta)  
 today (as in pay)  
 todey (as in they)  
 todei (as in veil)  
 todea (as in great)  
 todai (as in rain)  
 todeig (as in feign)  
 todeigh (as in neighbor)  
 todaye (as in aye, meaning always)  
 todeh (as in eh?)  
 todée (as in fiancée, matinée)  
 todé (as in fiancé)  
 toder (as in bouquet)  
 toder (as in déjeuner, really French)  
 todau (as in gauge)

### Good reading

"Reading for Today's Children" is the theme of the 34th Yearbook Number (September) of the *National Elementary Principal*. In about fifty articles, experts of several levels of prominence in the field review thought and research on the subject.

\* \* \*

*Making Stories Live*, by Ellen H. McComb, in *Educational Screen* for November. Miss McComb gives suggestions on how teachers can compete successfully against the radio, TV, and motion picture in storytelling. Simple line drawings, felt figures, puppets, dramatizations or recordings, and filmstrips, and the opaque projector are a few of the tools she recommends for teachers to strengthen their competition.

\* \* \*

*Are They Cleaning Up the Comics*, by Frederick Wertham, in the October *Virginia Journal of Education*. Dr. Wertham's answer is "no"; he feels that the "code" of the Comics Magazine Association of America has not cleaned up the comics and that we, therefore, should not relax our attention. The content of the love and horror comics is such that it can stifle learning and warp personalities, and through advertisements furnish children with brutal weapons.

\* \* \*

*What Research Indicates About Teaching in the Language Arts*, by Harold G. Shane, in the *NEA Journal* for October. Dr. Shane reviews findings and their implications in reading, handwriting, spelling, English usage, children's literature, listening, and foreign language, with the view that many of the perennial questions asked by teachers have been answered. Finding the answer requires only a search of the research journals. The article is a brief overview of Dr. Shane's booklet, *Research Helps in Teaching the Language Arts*, available from the NEA for \$1.

✎

### Supervision bulletin

*A Look at Supervision in Alabama* has been

published recently by the A.E.A. Department of Supervisors and Directors of Instruction. This bulletin will be helpful to teachers, principals, supervisors, and superintendents. Orders should be placed with Miss Lulu Palmer, State Department of Education, State Office Building, Montgomery, Alabama. Price, \$1.



### New record album

*Let's Listen*, by M. Marie Bresnahan and W. L. Pronovost, is an album of three 10-inch LP recordings aimed at motivating children to listen to and participate in speech activities. Consisting of speech and songs, the material is organized into 16 lessons, each of which focuses attention on a specific speech sound or combination of sounds found either at the beginning or ending of a word.

The overall objectives of the album are to develop in children an awareness of similarities and differences in speech sounds and to stimulate their practice in listening to and producing correct speech forms. Teaching suggestions are provided for each lesson in the front leaves of the album: notes on guiding the lesson, suggested follow-up activities, and special notes to the teacher.

The wide variety of speaking and listening experiences in the lessons and the follow-up activities should make the album a helpful teaching aid. Moreover, most children will find the material interesting.

*Let's Listen* is available from Ginn and Company, Boston. Price: \$7.50 for the album of three records.



### Folklore map

*A Map of America Folklore*, wall-size, gaily colored, is available for \$.50 from the National Conference American Folklore for Youth, Ball State Teachers College, Muncie, Indiana. More than one hundred characters in the 48 states are pictured. The map should be helpful in the hero-approach to literature in the grades.

Numerous other folklore materials are

available from the Conference, some singly, some free, and others in packets. We suggest that you write to Dr. Elizabeth Pilant, Executive Secretary, at Ball State Teachers College, Muncie, Indiana, for a complete listing.



These are the Junior Literary Guild selections for January:

For boys and girls 5 and 6 years old:

*Mop Top* by Don Freeman. The Viking Press, Inc., \$2.00

For boys and girls 7 and 8 years old:

*Snow Birthday* by Helen Kay. Farrar, Straus & Cudahy, Inc., \$2.50

For boys and girls 9, 10, and 11 years old:

*The Little Cow and the Turtle* by Meindert DeJong. Harper and Brothers, \$2.50

For girls 12 to 16 years old:

*Candle In The Sun* by Elizabeth Hamilton Friermood. Doubleday & Company, Inc., \$2.75

For boys 12 to 16 years old:

*The Secret of the Martian Moons* by Donald A. Wollheim. The John C. Winston Co., \$2.00



### New book on children's literature

*Story and Verse for Children*, revised edition, by Miriam Blanton Huber. Illustrations by Lynd Ward. Macmillan, \$6. 812 pp.

Dr. Huber has revised her 1940 book and turned out one of the better volumes in the field. It presents a comprehensive but not exhaustive survey about children's literature and offers a thorough sampling of types. The volume strikes solidly the happy medium between a children's literature textbook and an anthology which a teacher would use with children; it has possibilities for both uses.

The volume is organized into the following sections, with additional grouping of selections within each: Books and Children, Mother Goose Rhymes, Verse, Old Tales and Legends, Make-Believe Stories, Stories of Then and Now, and The Makers of Children's Books.



May Hill Arbuthnot

# BOOKS FOR CHILDREN

Edited by MAY HILL ARBUTHNOT

*Mrs. Arbuthnot is well-known as a writer and lecturer in the field of children's literature. She is the author of CHILDREN AND BOOKS (Scott, Foresman, 1947) and three anthologies, combined in the single volume, THE ARBUTHNOT ANTHOLOGY (Scott, Foresman, 1953).*

MARGARET MARY CLARK reviews books of science, social studies, and biography. Miss Clark is head of the Lewis Carroll Room, Cleveland Public Library, and editor of ADVENTURING WITH BOOKS (National Council of Teachers of English, 1950).

## A New Writer for Children

*A Lemon and a Star.* By E. C. Spykman. Harcourt, 1955. \$2.75. (10-14).

Mrs. Spykman is a gifted newcomer to the field of children's books and her first story



*A Lemon and a Star*

about the four motherless Cares children is hauntingly familiar and funny. It is familiar because every child or grownup who reads it will find there a part of himself, and funny because the deadly preoccupation of the children with their feud or adventure of the moment develops some hilarious situations. Ten-year-old Jane carries on a book-long battle with bossy thirteen-year-old Ted whom she both loathes and admires in true sisterly fashion. Hubert is a younger brother who, when

he explodes into action is past stopping, and Edie is the charming five-year-old who manages to poke a finger into everyone's pie. When Ted gives Jane a lemon for a birthday present the war is on. The story moves slowly with some adventures that are a bit hair-raising. But when the final Revolt is organized and the armed hordes close in on pompous Ted only the oozy marsh stays their battle axes. And how could Jane know that returning disheveled from this near-triumph she was going to barge right into the presence of a new mother? After due thought Jane decided to call her "Madame," which Madame liked. Hubert said she

smelled better than any woman he had ever met, but Ted would have none of her, so the feud was still on in a new direction. It was madame herself who brought the children together in the end, united in their single hearted belief that



Margaret Mary Clark

"she's all right!" This is a warm and funny family story, as intensely child-centered as the Ransome books and beautifully told.

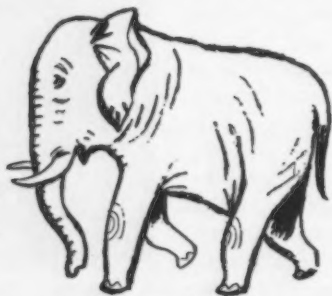
### Some Choice Picture-Stories

*Mop Top*. Pictures and story by Don Freeman. Viking, 1955. \$2.00. (3-6).

One of the most irresistible heroes of the picture-book crowd is Mop Top, called "Moppy" because his hair looked like a floppy red mop. Only under the pressure of an approaching birthday party will he consider a hair cut and even under those pleasant circumstances he has his doubts. The crisis in his life that changes his mind is exceedingly funny. With a smooth red head to his credit and a big cake that reads, "Happy Birthday Marty," which is his real name forevermore, no boy could be happier than our well trimmed hero. And no grownup will escape with one reading of his story. The audience demands innumerable repeat performances.

*Chaga*. By William Lipkind. Ill. by Nicolas Mordvinoff. Harcourt, 1955. \$2.50. (5-9).

In many ways, *Chaga* is the most satisfactory story this original pair has produced. The pictures are exotic and striking. The story has a pleasant scare to it. Who doesn't enjoy a spinal chill now and then? And story and pictures march along with admirable compatibility. Chaga the elephant used to trumpet his mightiness to the whole jungle and watch the small creatures run for their lives.



*Chaga*

Then he ate some new kind of grass and found himself so small that when a leopard chased him he could take refuge in a rabbit's burrow. This was a strange world. The chase was on and Chaga was the quarry. When a wise old monkey helped him back to elephant size once more, he had learned his lesson. He knew what it was to be small in a big world.

*Come Back, Paul*. By Muriel Rukeyser. Ill. by the author. Harper, 1955. \$2.50. (3-6).

Any four or five-year-old knows just what this author<sup>•</sup> is talking about—the annoying habit grownups have of getting lost, strayed, or mislaid. Mothers, fathers, nurses, uncles, aunts all do it, and it happens anywhere. "A thousand, thousand women . . . look like your mother behind," but when you go round in front where the faces are, they are the wrong faces. Now where can your grownup be? This theme is developed with many variations in gay lilting lines and illustrative patterns that, like the grownups, move in a mysterious way. Then comes the reassuring conclusion that these grownups always get found again and all the time you are looking for them, they are really looking for you. In this amusing little confusion a poet takes a child's-eye view of the world of places, people, and predicaments.

### Indians Long Ago and Today

*Ojibway Drums*. By Marion W. Magoon. Illustrated by Larry Toschik. Longmans, 1955. \$2.75. (8-12).

It is surprising to find the author of medieval *Dusty Foot* writing about the Canadian Ojibway tribe in the days before the coming of the white man. It is an absorbing story about Little Half Sky, his father Chief Crashing Thunder, his competent mother and his best friend Big Face. Neither boy has spent the night on Dreamers' Rock and found his manito, but in spite of their pranks and name calling both boys are growing in responsibility. Half Sky has phenomenally sharp ears, and





*Ojibway Drums*

though he warns his tribe that he has heard the Iroquois war chant, the tribe is surprised when the enemy attacks and many are taken prisoner, including the Chief. Half Sky and Big Face trick the enemy, and the prisoners escape but war between the tribes is not over. There are fascinating details of the boys' preparation for their night on Dreamers' Rock, their long fast, the loneliness of their vigil, their anxiety until they find their manito and a song for the final ceremony. Family and tribal life is recorded through an unusually lively gallery of characters. The wise old grandfather, a querulous old squaw appropriately named, Crow Tongue, the medicine man, the herb gatherer and Half Sky's mother and father are a few of the memorable people that make this Indian village understandable and real.

*His Indian Brother.* By Hazel Wilson. Illustrated by Robert Henneberger. Abingdon, 1955. \$2.00. (9-14).

Another story about the ways of forest Indians is Mrs. Wilson's *His Indian Brother*. It is based on the historical fact that a white boy, Brad Porter, was left alone in a cabin in the Maine woods, sometime around 1812. Through a series of accidents, the Porter family could not get to the cabin when Brad expected them. Carelessness and misfortune left the boy without food supplies, fishing tackle, and gun. When starvation had reduced him to near death, he was found and cared for by an Indian chief and his son Sabbatis. The

rest of the story tells how the boys proved to the chief that they could live in the forest by "old ways"—bows and arrows in place of guns. Wary of each other at first, and a bit scornful, the boys become fast friends. Brad learns fast and finds he likes Indian ways and their code of behavior in the forest in relation to the live creatures they must hunt for food. The return of his family some nine months later poses the most difficult problem Brad has ever faced. How can he give up Sabbatis and the Chief when they have saved his life and accepted him as one of their tribe? The conclusion is necessarily a compromise about which young readers will probably feel much as Sabbatis and Brad did. The forest lore of this book will fascinate young woodsmen of today and Mrs. Wilson's careful research can be relied upon to give authenticity to this story as it did to her fine biographies of *Lafayette* and *Mad Anthony Wayne*.

*The Whirly Bird.* By Aylesa Forsee. Ill. by Tom Two Arrows. Lippincott, 1955. \$2.75. (8-12).

It is important that today's children should understand the plight of the Navaho Indians, living on reservations in grievous poverty, victims of their own customs and beliefs, and inadequately cared for by the government whose wards they are. This book attempts to provide such a picture in the course of an appealing story. It is not too well written but it has the ring of authenticity and young Chaki, a Navaho boy, is an endearing hero.



*The Whirly Bird*

He has two special desires—to ride the sky in a "twirly bird" and to attend the Inter-Tribal Ceremonial in Gallup. But all of his hard earned twelve dollars go to the tribal Medicine Man for a Healing Chant to cure his father of the white man's coughing sickness. The ceremony is described in detail and it leaves Chaki with the growing conviction that it not only will not cure but may even make his father worse. For Chaki has been to the reservation school and learned something of the white man's ways. The various episodes of the story show the home and work customs of the Navahos, their loyalties and friendships, their ambitions and poverty. The missionaries give food and blankets at Christmas time. Kind, but no solution for the unsolved problems of the tribe! Chaki's friendship with another boy his own age is a fine thing, and in the end when an accident brings Chaki the chance to ride in a "twirly bird" and see the white man's world he tells his grandfather, "I think . . . that the hogan, the desert, even the sheep will always be inside me. I belong to the People."

### For the Middle Years

*Beezus and Ramona.* By Beverly Cleary. Illustrated by Louis Darling. Morrow, 1955. \$2.50. (8-12).

Here is Henry Huggins' devoted friend



*Beezus and Ramona*

Beezus with a problem sister to cope with. There are moments when Beezus is so fed up on Ramona's temper tantrums, her single track devotion to picture books about steam shovels, and her fiendish ability to get her own way, that she wonders why there should be such pests as little sisters. Finally, after Ramona has ruined two cakes intended for Beezus' birthday, big sister breaks down and confesses that she doesn't love Ramona one little bit. To her amazement, mother and Aunt Beatrice both begin to laugh and to tell all the awful things they did to each other as children. Beezus is horrified and delighted. When a splendid store birthday cake is served and even Ramona sings "Happy birthday dear Beezus," Beezus is once more resigned to little sisters. Not as challenging as Henry's achievements, the story of Beezus' endurance contests are amusing and will console many a long suffering older sister.

*The Golden Name Day.* By Jennie D. Lindquist. Ill. by Garth Williams. Harper, 1955. \$2.75. (8-12).

The editor of *Horn Book*, Jennie Lindquist, has written a girls' story so compounded of the delights and wonders of childhood that no one can read it without feeling more warmly alive than he did before. Nancy is to spend a year with her Grandma and Grandpa Benson on their farm, and she arrives just in time for Grandma's Name Day celebration. That is a new one to Nancy, but all her cousins, uncles, aunts, and their friends have such parties because, of course, their names are in the Swedish Almanac. When it is discovered that there is no such name as Nancy in the book they tactfully assure her that someone will think of something to do about it before the year is out. The chapters describe the happy episodes that make Nancy a part of her Swedish-American family with all their delightful festivals and celebrations. But no one solves Nancy's Name Day problem and finally our heroine grows fractious and Grand-

ma Benson has to tell her firmly that she is thinking too much about herself and doing nothing for anyone else. When Nancy mends her ways, a strange and pleasant surprise results, and the final celebration is a delight to everyone. Garth Williams' illustrations have caught the warmth and wonder of these golden days and especially of that enchanted night when Nancy was allowed to walk alone into the moon-lit magic of a blossoming apple orchard.

*The Little Cow and the Turtle.* By Meindert DeJong. Ill. by Maurice Sendak. Harper, 1955. \$2.50. (8—).

Mr. DeJong can go as deep down into the nature of animals as he can into the hearts of children. *Smoke Above the Lane* proved that and so does this story of the farmer's thirteenth cow, an incredibly gay and nosy little white cow. Her carryings on involved a prolonged friendship with hoboos in a hobo jungle, where she learned some unique habits. Then, there was a mob of children on bicycles who were devoted to her, and finally, there was the big snapping turtle to whom she was devoted. Why a huge snapping turtle should be inching its way over hills and meadows, with no water anywhere around, only the farmer understood. It was an Odyssey towards a long forgotten pond. The Little Cow paced slowly along with the turtle day after day, licking its drying shell now and then, and so providing the only moisture it got. The climax is a hair raiser. It involves a race with a Diesel engine, fifty children trying to save the turtle and the cow, the farmer racing too and the farmer's wife terrified into climbing the great ladder to the windmill that she had been afraid of all her days. No one could have been more surprised at the conclusion of this madness than the Little Cow and the Turtle unless it was the poor engineer who had shut his eyes to avoid seeing death on the tracks. Tenderly written, this is a wonderful book to read

aloud or even tell. And thanks, Mr. DeJong, for a cow instead of the usual horse hero.

### Social Studies

*Who Fishes For Oil?* Written and illustrated by Norman Bate. Scribner. 1955. \$2.50. (5-8).

A dissatisfied little shrimp-boat abandons its own work to join in the much more exciting task of drilling into the sea for oil. Like a curious child, the shrimp-boat wants to know



*Who Fishes For Oil?*

what all the engineers and cranes and derricks are doing, and in the sixty days that follow, he learns a great deal about drilling for oil and so does the reader. A violent storm that endangers the drilling equipment, and an oil gusher that nearly explodes, add color and adventure to this highly entertaining informational picture book by the author of *Who Built the Highway?* and *Who Built the Bridge?* Large action-filled drawings in greens and blacks are as exciting as the story.

M. M. C.

*Michel of Switzerland.* Written and illustrated with photographs by Peter Buckley. Franklin Watts. 1955. \$3.50. (9-13).

Just as Peter Buckley's *Cesare of Italy* and *Luis of Spain* have helped introduce American readers to real children of other lands, the story of twelve year old Michel Gaspoz and



*Michel of Switzerland*

his family will give children a real feeling for the life in Switzerland. There is excellent general information on the country together with the story of how Michel and his family live in their valley home surrounded by Alps. The author's photographs, whether of people at work or play, or breath-taking Swiss scenery, are exceptional in quality. This slender book of 79 pages will be valuable and stimulating supplement to the study of Switzerland.

M. M. C.

*Old Ironsides: The Fighting Constitution.* By Harry Hansen. Illustrated by Walter Buehr. Random House. (Landmark Books.) \$1.50. (11-14).

The frigate *Constitution* has a history almost as old as the United States. Built under the orders of President Washington as a ship in the first American Navy, the *Constitution* served against the Barbary pirates, in the war of 1812, and rescued from destruction by patriotic Americans, she now lies at dock in Boston, a symbol of American enterprise and seamanship. The story of the ship and the brave men who manned her offers interesting background reading, and is generously illustrated and well indexed.

M. M. C.

*Far Into The Night.* Written and illustrated by Claire and George Loudon. Scribner. 1955. \$2.50. (8-11).

Little known Bali is described in smooth flowing text and pastel illustrations of unusual beauty. There is a great deal of information about the island and its people, and interwoven through the factual material is the story of little Misi and her family. Misi is eager to be



*Far Into The Night*

one of the village dancers so that she can use her greatest talent to give pleasure to her family and friends. How she succeeds climaxes a charming story of village life, with its days moving at a quiet industrious pace, and its evenings made happy through people joining together for companionship and pleasure.

M. M. C.

*The Rainbow Book of American History.* By Earl Schenck Miers. Illustrated by James Daugherty. 1955. \$4.95. (11 and up).

Fifty chapters highlight the great events in American history from Leif Ericson's first venture until the present. Not only historic events and great leaders, but trends and developments such as electricity, radio, automobiles, baseball, and aviation are described and interpreted in relation to their influence on the American people. The book is written in lively and vigorous style, and illustrated by James Daugherty with over two hundred drawings in color which are a perfect comple-

ment to the text. The book's flag-red binding with flag-blue trim is just right for this distinctive introduction to the story of our country.

*Fish and Wildlife.* By C. B. Colby. Illustrated with photographs. Coward McCann. 1955. \$1.25. (11 and up.).

Conservation is just one function of the Department of Interior's Fish and Wildlife Service. Protecting our living natural resources is accomplished through refuges, fish breeding

stations, constant vigilance against animal and human predators, and in a multitude of other ways described in this excellent informational book which pays high tribute to the men and women of the Service who are continually "devising ways and means to help the wildlife of America to live longer lives and better ones."

M. M. Clark

*The Pony Express.* By Lee Jensen. Illustrated with historical pictures assembled by the author and original drawings by Nicholas Eggenhofer. Grosset and Dunlap. 1955. \$2.50. (10 and up).

Here is a book that will appeal to many ages. It is not only the story of the short lived Pony Express, but of the many other attempts to deliver mail that preceded it, and of the transcontinental telegraph that ended its usefulness. The gold rush, too, is an important part of this story because it created the need for speedier mail service to the rapidly growing west. The author has assembled 146 reproductions of engravings, drawings, prints, and paintings which convey all the drama and danger of the period, as do the fine original drawings. Six pages of maps show the route of the Pony Express through the seven states it covered. The book is a contribution to the study of westward expansion, and even the non-reader will be fascinated by the pictures.

M. M. C.



*Fish and Wildlife*

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